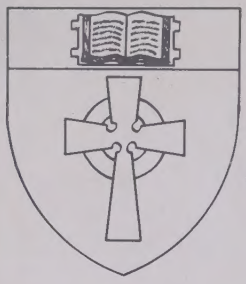

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EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NONCONFORMITY

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BY

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PREFACE.

THE following chapters are an attempt to separate the mass of detail in the history of Eighteenth Century Nonconformity, and to show the principles of development which were at work. It will be readily recognised by those acquainted with the period, that countless illustrations could have been given of the subjects referred to. It is hoped that what has been written will be sufficient to create interest, as well as to further local research, without which the complete history of Nonconformity will never be known.

Thanks are sincerely offered to the Librarian of the Memorial Hall Library, London, the Librarian of the Dr. Williams' Library, Messrs. Nicholson and Axon, Mr. R. S. Robson, and particularly to Professor Tout and the Rev. Alexander Gordon, the latter having kindly read the proof-sheets.

J. HAY COLLIGAN.

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CHAPTER I.

THE FATHERS OF NONCONFORMITY.

NONCONFORMITY originated in England through a secession, or as it is usually called, an ejection of clergymen from the Established Church on August 24, 1662. The story has been told by many writers, but the one to whom Nonconformity will be perpetually indebted is Edmund Calamy, D.D. (1671-1732), the original biographer of these noble men.[1]

There have been, and probably always will be, opposite opinions about the Act of Uniformity, and it is not necessary to discuss them at present. There always will be followers of Calamy, admiring the action of the ejected ministers, and followers of Dr. John Walker, replying that the sufferings of the ejected ministers were no greater than those imposed by the Commonwealth upon the clergy of that period. The simplest way for one to find out his own view, is to examine the events which preceded the Act of Uniformity. Secondly, the Act itself should be read, not as a piece of archaic literature, but as a statute to be literally and rigidly enforced. Lastly, it should be remembered that many of the ejected clergy belonged to families which had seen the Prayer Book passing through its various ecclesiastical phases; in some cases having had relatives directly

[1] Attention is drawn to a weighty article on "Calamy as a Biographer," by Rev. Alex. Gordon, M.A., in the "Congregational Historical Society's Trans.," VI, IV. 233.

interested in the making of this historical book. We shall then understand why so many men refused to make a "nick" in their conscience, for everything in English Christianity since that memorable year has gone to confirm the wisdom and uprightness of their action, as well as its heroism.

The descendants of the Puritan party were put into a most difficult position by the Act. Some of them anticipated events, and resigned at the Restoration. The remainder consistently followed the result of their own principles, and voluntarily accepted ejection. They were not "intruders" as a partisan tradition has characterized them, for an Act passed the year of the Restoration confirmed them in their benefices if the previous occupants were dead, or had resigned. All of them were not occupying "sequestrated" livings, and many who had done so had gone into other livings at the Restoration. Their victors called them "thieves and robbers," who had not entered by the door, but had they conformed, as others did, their characters would never have been challenged. It is to their abiding honour that they remained consistent with their party and their conscience, and rejected a Prayer Book which to this day is a witness of their assertion regarding its half-reformed teaching.

The number of beneficed clergymen in England at the Restoration was estimated at nine thousand, and of these, about two thousand refused to conform. This latter figure was questioned by Anthony Wood, who stated that the number was not more than seven hundred, but Calamy replied to him and to Dr. John Walker, and proved his previous statements. The calibre, moral quality, and social position of the fathers of Nonconformity represented the highest grade in England in the

seventeenth century. Their courage in the cause of religion will always be an inspiration. They counted it a privilege to suffer for Scriptural doctrine, but they never magnified their sufferings. They did nothing to perpetuate their own memory, except to keep the Faith, and they quietly accepted ejectment as their only way to Christ, because conformity on the terms offered was unthinkable. The greater number of them keenly felt a separation from the National Church. Some had received Episcopal Orders, and others Presbyterian, but that question, with those of the Prayer Book and of an Established Church, ultimately would have been settled, had a conciliatory and Christian spirit been shown by their opponents.

The ages of the ejected ministers, generally speaking, were from thirty to fifty, but quite a number were born in the closing years of the sixteenth century. In a way, they were older than their ages suggest to a modern mind, as they had been brought up in an environment which only embraced one view of life, and that was the Calvinistic. It will be better not to mention names where the humblest ought to be had in remembrance. The chief facts of their career may be found in Calamy, or in the biographers of Nonconformity who have followed him, but much material still lies buried in the parish registers of the land. The more widely the facts are known, the greater will be the admiration for that band of noble men.[1]

The ejected ministers were not all of the one grand type. Some of them were scholars and Churchmen of high value; others were ordinary clergymen, whose most useful service had been in the development of personal

[1] A fine tribute to Richard Frankland will be found in an admirable volume, entitled "The Older Nonconformity in Kendal," recently published by Messrs. Nicholson & Axon.

religion among their parishioners, while at the same time retaining the customary services belonging to the Established Church. A few, as Calamy readily admitted, were unsatisfactory in conduct and morals. Taking these circumstances into account, and allowing a certain depreciation for what may be called the inevitable accompaniments of the age, the ejected ministers nevertheless made a precious contribution to the Protestant tradition. Their action was evidence of the reality of a Christian conscience, at a time when England was sadly in need of such a testimony.

CHAPTER II.

THE REVOLUTION SETTLEMENT.

THE twenty-seven years that lay between the Act of Uniformity and the Revolution Settlement, form a strenuous period in the history of English Nonconformity. It is not necessary to go into the details of this heroic age, but the record of it will always survive in such impartial documents as Episcopal Visitation Lists, Records of Quarter Sessions, List of Licences at the Indulgence, and other papers which indicate the attitude of the Established Church to Nonconformists.[1] It is not too much to say that Nonconformity would never have lived through this time of trial, had it not been true to the Apostolic tradition, and had it not contained some of the indestructible elements of the Christian religion.

The welcome given to William of Orange in the winter of 1688 was characteristic of the reasonable and Protestant spirit of all parties in England at that time. Three days after he arrived in London, a few Nonconforming ministers with the Bishop of London waited upon the Prince, and, later, about ninety ministers, introduced by the Earl of Devonshire, Lord Wharton and Lord Wiltshire, presented an Address, in which they stated that "although they did now appear in a distinct company, they did not on a distinct account, but on that only which was common to them and to all Protestants". When the Prince was crowned in the following spring,

[1] Prof. Lyon Turner has recently rendered a valuable service to Nonconformity by his three exhaustive volumes on the Licences.

the Dissenters were among the most loyal supporters of the new regime, and it looked as if at last the hour had arrived for a truly National Christian Church in England.[1]

Calamy acknowledges that the King kept his promise, "to endeavour a good agreement between the Church of England and all Protestant Dissenters," but even a king cannot always do what he desires. The Dissenters were satisfied, and took every occasion to show their loyalty. In the month of May, 1689, an Act was passed for Liberty of Conscience, and although the word "toleration" does not appear in the Act, it has come to be associated with it. The effect of this title has been to give a wrong impression of the actual circumstances under which the Act was passed, and it has from time to time been advocated that the Act signified a toleration of the Dissenters by the Church of England. The fact is that the Act represented an agreement between all the Protestant parties regarding a general liberty of conscience, with the exception of the cases specified therein. Locke's first two Letters on Toleration abundantly show the spirit in which this Act was framed. It was not until twenty years afterwards that this view of the Act was questioned, and only then by Sacheverell, who was impeached for so doing.

Among the Church party, disputes began at once. Some of them scrupled at taking the oath to William, as already they had sworn allegiance to James, who was in exile. Others were unwilling to alter and amend the Constitution, Worship, and Discipline of the Established Church; and Calamy states that it was observed with satisfaction by the Dissenters, that previous controversies had given to at least a portion of the clergy a grasp of the Protestant position in these matters. The spirit of the debates on the Comprehension Bill was much better than

[1] Calamy's "Life and Times," Vol. I (by J. T. Rutt, pub. 1829).

that shown at the time of the Act of Uniformity, and Calamy goes so far as to say that had Presbyterian Orders been recognized, and the further proposals been accepted, in all probability two-thirds of the Dissenters would have gone into the new National Church.

An illustration of the tolerant spirit in many outside the Church may be seen from a speech, delivered by the Earl of Warrington in 1692. Addressing the Grand Jury at Chester, he said:—

"I cannot see wherefore those rules should be terms of Communion that are not terms of Salvation. . . . I was always of opinion that it would never go well with England till every man might worship God in his own way; for nothing can be more unreasonable than to expect that a man should believe otherwise than according to the conviction that is upon him; or that one man's opinion should be a rule or guide to another man's conscience."

The last decade of the seventeenth century was occupied with several questions, as disturbing and distressing as the Church of England has ever encountered. The Revolution Settlement was a compromise which greatly improved the position of the Nonconformists, and made them ready to consider proposals for Comprehension. The difficulty was that the Church of England, "as that part affected to be called," was eager to absorb not only the Ordinances of Divine Worship, but all Civil power. Nonconformity, or at least the Presbyterian portion of it, was prepared, "on a Scriptural bottom," to meet the Established Church to a degree which forms a contrast to the radical Nonconformity of modern times.

The Non-jurors and their adherents were the cause of obstruction, but the remarkable proposals which the Commissioners made in view of the meeting of Convocation in 1689 are substantial evidence of the close approach of Christian union in England at that time.

When the prospect of Comprehension disappeared, the London Dissenting ministers agreed to obliterate the terms "Presbyterian" and "Congregational," and described themselves as "the United Ministers". They were careful to explain that their rules were "not as a measure for any National Constitution, but for the preservation of Order in our congregations that cannot come up to the common Rule by Law established". It may in these days seem superfluous that a body of London ministers should find it necessary to state that they were not setting up a National Church; but at that time, Nonconformity was a rival, if not a menace to a Church established only a year before.

The articles in the "Heads of Agreement" are admirable, and prove how successfully Congregationalism and Presbyterianism may yet find their ground of union. The Presbyterianism was not rigid, and the Congregationalism might be considered too Presbyterian by the modern Independent, but the ideal was noble, and would have been realized to the permanent good of Nonconformity if jealousy had not begun its pernicious work.

The Presbyterian ministers were more conservative in their politics, and more moderate in their theology than the Independents. Many of them belonged to families of the middle-class, and were not altogether impervious to the advantages which learning and status had given them. The modern terms of distinction which we use under such circumstances would be misleading, if applied too literally, but the Presbyterians may be said to have represented an aristocratic element in Nonconformity, while the Independents were more democratic in their views, as well as in their origin. It is one of the sad things of Nonconformist history that two such great parties should have drifted apart, at a time when they might have prevented much controversy and division.

CHAPTER III.

THE ANTINOMIAN CONTROVERSY.

LESS than twelve months after the arrival of Prince William in London, English Protestantism was at war with itself. The basis of doctrinal agreement which had willingly been accepted by all parties, suddenly became unsatisfactory, and was attacked with a fierceness and a freedom unknown before.

It was not only in one party that this disturbance occurred. Protestantism—and this meant Christian England—was constrained to travel along a pathway which was disagreeable to her even at that time, the end whereof appeared to be absolute individualism in religion.

In order to understand the position, we shall have to keep clearly before us the simple but important fact that Calvinism as a system of theology had already become obsolete at the time of the Revolution. By this, we mean that the Calvinism of the Westminster Assembly and of its credal standards no longer expressed a living faith, as it had done, fifty years before. These documents had not been superseded, and the Savoy Confession was a modification only in minor points. The Catechisms of the Assembly were still considered to be synonymous with the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, and at the Revolution Settlement no difficulty had been found among the parties; but the opinions of men had broadened the theological outlook, and it may be said of the Assembly's standards what was said by

Bishop Burnet about the Church of England Articles—that they were accepted as Articles of Peace.

The Church of England soon had to face a ten years' theological conflict, in which the most vital doctrines of the Christian Faith were assailed by members of that Church. The controversy arose by the publication, in 1690, of a pamphlet written by Arthur Bury, D.D. (1624-1713), the Rector of Exeter College, Oxford, who had been expelled from this position the previous year.

In an examination of the Apostolic doctrine, he came to the conclusion that the subject of the Trinity was impertinent to our Lord's design, that it was fruitless, and that it was dangerous.[1]

It is beyond our present subject to go into this controversy, but an examination of it, and of the "Socinian Tracts" which were the outcome of it, will prove that it was parallel with the Antinomian controversy, and was the explanation of the latter. Of the two controversies, that in the Established Church contained the graver issues, but the subsidiary subject of Justification was almost as vital to Protestantism and to Protestant Dissent. The two disputes were kept apart, although Frankland, Howe, and several other Dissenters replied to the Socinian writers, but the Antinomian controversy was the one which touched the Nonconformists acutely, leaving the two chief parties after ten years of argument, friendly, but apart.

The origin of the Antinomian controversy was a publication by his son of a volume of sermons by the late Tobias Crisp, D.D., a Wiltshire vicar (1600-1643). The sermons had been preached in and about London, nearly fifty years before, one having been delivered to Parliament, at the beginning of the Civil War. They referred to some technical points on the doctrine of Justification, and

[1] "The Naked Gospel."

they raised an old discussion which the leaders of Nonconformity were anxious to avoid. Unfortunately, the younger Crisp had obtained the signatures of twelve Dissenting ministers who vouched for the correctness of the transcript of his late father's sermons. This action had apparently been taken by them in innocence, but it immediately caused a flame. Old Richard Baxter, who knew the history of the controversy, was very much disturbed, and wished to write a reply, but was dissuaded by Howe, and dying a year afterwards, passed out of the arena.

Crisp adhered to his father's view, and used the following figure to illustrate their position :—

"If a nephew of mine fell from the ship into the sea when the ship was sailing, and the master should cast out a rope, and the nephew should say, 'Sir, I am not worthy; I fell overboard when I was smeared with pitch and tar; I am not clean enough to come on board again'—surely all the world would think such an one mad."

The publication of this volume perturbed the Dissenters very much. Daniel Williams, D.D. (1643 ?-1716), the Presbyterian minister at Hand Alley, London, was consulted by some of the members of the Presbyterian congregation of Wood Street, Dublin, where, previously, he had been the joint-pastor. In his day, Williams was known as one of the few who maintained high views on the subject of Presbytery, and, consequently, was disliked by those who favoured a broader and more democratic point of view. John Fox (1693-1763), who studied at the Exeter Academy under Hallet the elder, and who read Clarke's "Scripture Doctrine" upon its appearance in 1712, with the result that he was turned aside from the Dissenting ministry, was the means of preserving many interesting facts re-

lating to this early period. Fox has left an account of an interview which he had with Dr. Williams, and while his opinion was prejudiced, the incident is worth quoting. It occurred about two years before the death of Williams, when he was over seventy years of age, and the probability is that the frigid attitude of Williams was explained partly by the fact of the ill-health of Dr. Williams, and partly by the fact that Fox was under suspicion of heresy. Fox made a visit to London in 1714, and his father, anxious that he should enter the ministry, suggested that he might be examined. He saw Dr. Calamy, and was persuaded to visit Dr. Williams, his friend James Read promising to introduce him.

"I consented, and one afternoon . . . we waited on him at his house at Hoxton. After crossing a large court in which stood a coach, as an emblem of some state unusual to men of that rank, I was led into a large dark parlour at the upper end of which I discovered the figure of a man in black, sitting alone at a large wainscot table, smoking a pipe. As this figure seemed in no way affected by the noise we made on entering the room, but sat precisely in the same posture, without moving either his head or eyes to see who or what we were, I began to suspect that we had intruded at an unseasonable time, and kept myself as near the door as possible in order to facilitate my retreat, in case we should meet with some rebuke for our intrusion. But I was mistaken, for I perceived Mr. Read approaching near enough to be seen, who after making a very low bow which the Doctor returned only with 'How d'ye,' told the business he came about, and that he brought me to wait on him for that purpose. All this while I kept my first station, with my hat in my hand, having not yet ventured far enough in the room to fall into the focus of his eyes. At length, after two or three very loud and

significant puffs, he did vouchsafe to roll his eyes towards me, and with great gravity ask me the three questions—'What is your name?' 'Where were you bred?' 'Have you a certificate from your Tutor?' I answered them with great brevity, upon which ensued another very solemn and considerable silence. At length, with great deliberation and indifference he replied that one Lorimer (a man always employed to examine), was out of Town, but he would mention it at his return, and that I might hear further. Upon this we made our obeisances, and retired, leaving him in the same mannerly position in which we found him; and glad enough was I to get free from the greatest bundle of pride, affectation, and ill-manners I had ever met with."

This piquant picture of one whose memory was to be afterwards perpetuated in the historic Library which bears his name, was no doubt true, although unfavourable. It represents Williams, as some of his contemporaries portrayed him, and although Fox's interview was more than ten years after the Antinomian controversy had ceased, it is a confirmation of the impression of Williams which his opponents had during that episode.

The Antinomian controversy originated in London, through one of those incidental events which from time to time have potently affected Nonconformity. Richard Davis, a Welsh schoolmaster who had been for a time in London, but had become a Baptist minister at Rothwell, in Northamptonshire, began to preach crass and ultra-Calvinistic doctrine. Complaints having been made about him by the neighbouring ministers, he published a pamphlet in his own defence, and in reply to one which had been circulated regarding him. This compelled the London ministers to answer him, which they did a few weeks afterwards. They declared that

they had been consulted by their grieved brethren in the country, and, in order that they might not be wanting in faithfulness and zeal, they bore their testimony against the errors which Davis had maintained. The chief error of Davis is seen in the following paragraph :—

"That the Law of Innocency was not able to save Man at first; that Justification upon believing is only a manifestation to the conscience of an antecedent Justification, and so it is not the state of the soul, but its sense of its state that is altered upon Conversion; that Justifying Faith is a persuasion that our sins are pardoned, and when it is said we believe for Pardon, it is meant for the knowledge of Pardon."

The London ministers further testified against the unchristian practice that though Mr. Davis scrupled not to baptize the children of his own people, yet he rebaptized such adult members as were baptized in their infancy by any ministers of the Church of England. They further objected to his sending forth preachers unfit for the ministry, and unapproved by the neighbouring ministers, and they moreover agreed that "he never was, nor is esteemed by us of the number of the United Brethren".

Some of the opinions of Davis resembled the notions of Crisp, and the son of the latter added fuel to the fire, in another book, in which he reflected upon Dr. Williams by name. In self-defence, Williams referred to the matter "once, and but once," in the Pinners' Hall Lecture, in order to refute the charges against him and his party of being Papists, Arminians, and Antinomians. When the minister of Silver Street Independent Meeting, Thomas Cole, came to take his turn at Pinners' Hall Lecture, he replied to Williams, and afterwards took every opportunity of describing Williams and his friend as "Legalists". Hearing that Cole was about to publish

a book, Williams issued a volume in the summer of 1692. He attached a certificate signed by a number of leading ministers, his object being to "convince the world that the Presbyterian ministers at least, espouse not the Antinomian dotages, yea, and I am credibly informed that the most learned country ministers of the Congregational persuasion disallow the errors here opposed, and are amazed at such of their brethren in this city as are displeased with this book".

The chief point of dispute may be seen from the following passage:—

"Dr. Crisp's scheme is that by God's mere electing Decree, all saving blessings are by Divine obligation made ours, and nothing more is needful to our title to these blessings: that on the Cross all sins of the Elect were transferred to Christ, and ceased ever after to be their sin; that at the first moment of conception, a title to all these decreed blessings is personally applied to the Elect, and they invested actually therein. Hence the Elect have nothing to do in order to an interest in any of these blessings, nor ought they to intend the least good to themselves in what they do."

In the judgment of Dr. Williams, this doctrine could only lead to the dethronement of Christ, and as a warning he pointed to the Antinomian influence in Germany and New England, recalling also how "by its stroke at the vitals of religion, it alarmed most of the pulpits of England" in the middle of the seventeenth century.

The chief opponent on the other side was Isaac Chauncy (1632-1712), a prominent Congregationalist, who issued a long and detailed reply to Dr. Williams. It was through him that the controversy became personal, and the relations between the two denominations acute. In his book he applied the name "Neonomian" to Williams, and defined the position of the latter as "One

that affirms the Old Law is abolished, and therefore is a superlative Antinomian ; but pleads for a New Law and Justification by works, and therefore is a Neonomian ".

In the autumn of the year 1692 matters became serious, and one writer besought " the herdman not to fall out, for Abraham and Lot are brethren ". The " Heads of Agreement " which had been drawn up by the two parties in 1691, now became unsuitable for the new condition of things. Accordingly, another document was drawn up, defining the agreement of the United Ministers in doctrinals. About the same time a short paper was printed, in which some of the London ministers definitely dissociated themselves from Richard Davis, believing that it was in the interests of Nonconformity to do so. The wisdom of the action cannot be questioned, upon the admissions and statements of Davis himself, but it was resented by several of the London ministers as another attempt by the Presbyterians " to drive at jurisdiction ".

The " Agreement in Doctrinals " was accepted unanimously by the leaders on both sides, a few days before Christmas of the year 1692, but three weeks afterwards, Thomas Cole, the minister of Silver Street Independent Meeting, published a violent attack upon the opinions of Williams, declaring that " Hell is full of Legal convictions ". The two parties became increasingly unfriendly. From the year 1672, a weekly lecture had been given at Pinners' Hall, intended as a Morning Service for the merchants of the city. It had been carried on by four Presbyterian ministers and two Independents, and had been maintained by laymen. The Presbyterian party had no doubt irritated the Independents by declining to send students to Thomas Goodwin of Pinner, who had taken the Independent side. This occurred in June, 1693, and for the next eighteen months the feeling between the parties was bitter. Some time between

the months of August and November, Dr. Williams published another volume, and the result was that he was not allowed to deliver the Lecture at Pinners' Hall. Several Presbyterian ministers thereupon established a Lecture at Salters' Hall, and a few weeks afterwards, the Independent party established the Congregational Fund Board.

The personal dislike of Dr. Williams by the Congregationalist party continued, and about three months after the breach at Pinners' Hall, assumed a grave character. A woman had been called in to render some service to Dr. Williams in an illness, and the action was construed by several of his opponents as an instance of immorality. The details may still be read in the pamphlets which belong to this portion of an extraordinary dispute in Protestant Dissent, and it is not necessary to repeat them here. It is pleasing, however, to be able to state that after a complete examination of his whole life, Dr. Williams was fully acquitted, the reports of the Committee being unanimously adopted by the United Ministers on April 8, 1695, nearly sixty ministers being present.

The dispute dragged on for some time longer, Stephen Lobb (d. 1699), a well-known Independent minister, taking an aggressive part. Another writer, who attempted to settle the controversy by the enunciation of a middle way, was John Humfreys, a venerable figure in Protestant Dissent, the last of the London ministers, and one of the last of those who had been ejected in 1662. At length a settlement was arrived at on the basis of the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, with the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Confessional; and an important note was added that they would not charge any brother with the consequences of any expression of his, which he himself should disown. This paper was sent to the Congregational brethren, with a letter

signed by seven Presbyterian ministers, and dated March 25, 1696—a New Year's resolution, surely!

The Antinomian controversy was one of the inevitable episodes in the attempt to free England from the shackles of Calvinism. Whatever our estimate of the fact may be, an examination of the literature of the last ten years of the seventeenth century will convince a careful reader that men's religious principles were operating from a different base than that which had satisfied their fathers. One writer, drawing attention to this fact, described the current theology as "the sour leaven of Arminianism," and remarked upon the neglect of Calvin, Zanchy, Ames, Perkins, Twisse, and divines of their stamp. He added that the desire was for "the new, rational methods of divinity" —the best illustration of which new blend of theology and philosophy was the work of John Locke.

The effect of the Antinomian controversy was felt in two different directions. Firstly, it created a reaction against Calvinism, which generally appeared in an unwillingness to support the positions which had been advocated about the middle of the seventeenth century. Secondly, it affected the denominational friendliness between the Presbyterians and the Independents. These parties did not become hostile to each other, but they magnified their differences, and they stood aloof from each other in a way which weakened the Dissenting Interest, which each unquestionably had at heart. Had these two sections of the Protestant Dissenters continued the happy relationships which were begun at the Revolution, the history of Nonconformity in the eighteenth century would never have been what it afterwards was.[1]

[1] The tracts relating to this controversy are in the Memorial Hall Library, London, and in the Dr. Williams' Library, London. An article giving details of this controversy is being prepared for the "Transactions" of the Congregational Historical Society.

CHAPTER IV.

DEISM.

It is difficult for us to-day to imagine the unbelief in Christianity which prevailed in England at the close of the eighteenth century.[1] It is evident in literature no less than in theology, and numerous pamphlets and periodicals of the times remain as vestiges of an irreligious age.

Protestant doctrine had been hammered out and shaped on the anvil of controversy, and controversy was inevitable in the breaking up of it.

The origin of the irreligion of the early eighteenth century, was not altogether in the moral laxity which succeeded the Restoration. Neither did it arise solely from indifference, but was partly a reaction from a theological epoch which had lasted about a century and a half, and partly from an emancipation of intellect that was taking place. The seventeenth century is often blamed for its ignorance, superstition, intolerance, and bigotry, when it ought to be praised for the way in which it destroyed more of these notions of the dark ages than any centuries before it had done. In attempting to define the relationship between eighteenth century Nonconformity and Deism, it must be particularly observed that theology has always been allied with philosophy, and whether for

[1] It is pointed out by Rev. Alex. Gordon that Archbishop Tillotson's Preface shows that Deism amounted to Atheism; Bishop Butler's Preface that it had been reduced to Deism.

weal or woe is a question for experts. It has had this alarming effect more than once, that belief in Christian theology has been overturned by the philosophy which happened to be in the ascendant. The name of Hobbes, the English philosopher, and Spinoza, the Jewish philosopher of Holland, were heard at the coffee-stalls in London in the last decade of the seventeenth century, and the wide acceptance of their views displaced the old theology, as well as the philosophy upon which it was founded.

Shortly after the Revolution, the word "Deism" began to appear, being used synonymously with "Hobbism" and "Atheism". The materialistic ideas of Hobbes and other writers were the original source of English Deism. After the first half of the eighteenth century, it was affirmed by more than one writer that the source of English Deism was John Locke, but whatever inferences may have been drawn from his philosophy, Locke's own view was Christian.

For convenience, the period of Deism may be placed between the years 1696 and 1742. In the former year Toland's book was published,[1] and in the latter, that by Henry Dodwell.[2] Between the names of Toland and Dodwell, are those of Tindal, Collins,[3] and Morgan,[4] whose works were injurious to Revealed religion. Matthew Tindal (1657-1733) was nearly fifty years of age when he attacked the Non-jurors,[5] but he was an old man when he wrote the book by which he is most widely known.[6] John Toland (1670-1722) wrote his book when he was a young man of twenty-six, and the lines of attack upon Christianity were similar in

[1] "Christianity not Mysterious," 1696.
[2] "Christianity not founded on Argument," 1742.
[3] "Discourse of Free Thinking," 1713.
[4] "The Moral Philosopher." First Edition (anon.), 1737.
[5] "The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted," 1706.
[6] "Christianity as old as the Creation," 1730.

all these writers, the titles of the book indicating their object.

The Deist who gave the Dissenters the greatest annoyance was Thomas Morgan. He had been educated gratuitously at Bridgwater Academy, and was dismissed from his pastorate at Marlborough for heterodoxy. These circumstances, together with his vigorous language and a style that savoured of self-assurance, perturbed the Dissenters quite as much as his argument. Doddridge was indignant, and so was Clarke of St. Albans. Leland replied to him in a book which Doddridge considered to be "amongst the best books our age has produced". Chandler and Hallet also answered him, and the Nonconformists took some trouble to dissociate their party from him.

In the Deistic controversy, the Dissenters played an honourable part on the side of Revealed religion. The work of Anthony Collins was one of the most important attacks which the Deists made,[1] and it received replies from Dr. Samuel Chandler and Rev. Moses Lowman, the former giving much satisfaction to the dignitaries of the Established Church. Three of the four chief answers to Tindal were contributed by the Dissenters, Dr. James Foster, Dr. John Leland of Dublin, and Rev. Simon Browne. Henry Dodwell's book received answers from Dr. George Benson and from Doddridge. The latter replied in the form of three Letters, the first of which John Jones, the worthy vicar of Alconbury, thought the most handsome controversial piece he ever remembered to have read.

Many facts could be given to show the valuable work accomplished by the Protestant Dissenters, on behalf of Revealed religion in England. It is an impressive aspect of a latitudinarian age that orthodox and heterodox alike perceived where the essentials lay, and

[1] "The Grounds of the Christian Religion," 1724.

came to a sincere agreement regarding them. Samuel Bourn (*secundus*) had hard words to say about the Calvinistic scheme, but it was he who considered the war with the Deists to be the greatest Christian controversy. John Barker, the friend of Doddridge, whose sympathy was not with the Arian party, told Doddridge that Benson's answer to Dodwell would count for something, "for none but a proper answer could come from that quarter". Bishop Burnet is reported to have said upon reading Whiston's answer to Collins: "I forgive him all his heresy". In numerous ways Conformity and Nonconformity, Calvinist and Arminian, Arian and Evangelical, all united in the effort to withstand the Deist, and to retain the citadel of Christian Faith.

The Nonconformists of England are entitled to be proud of the part which their eighteenth century representatives took in the Deistic controversy. There is internal evidence for presuming that the data for Bishop Butler's famous argument was accumulated by him, when he was preparing for the Dissenting ministry at Tewkesbury Academy. It is a splendid tribute to the theological training of those days, that at a time when it seemed as if Revealed religion was the last thing to believe, the Nonconformist ministry was able to distinguish between the primary and the secondary things of Christianity, and to insist with vehemence and eloquence upon preserving the deposit of doctrine which in their judgment contained the Christianity of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V.

THE SALTERS' HALL CONTROVERSY.

THE Salters' Hall controversy is the most critical event which has ever occurred in the history of Nonconformity, although it is difficult by the mere narration of the details to convey the significance of the issues involved. The three or four heated meetings of the London Dissenting ministers designated "the Salters' Hall Synod," were of such a personal nature that the modern tendency would be to forget them; but to do this with the Salters' Hall Synod would be to bury principles with personalities.

Since the Antinomian controversy, notwithstanding the divergence of view between the Nonconformists, there had existed a friendly co-operation on behalf of what their political supporters called "the Dissenting Interest". This was, from the year 1727, conserved by the Three Denominations (Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist ministers), which representative body had and still has direct access to the Throne on matters affecting the welfare of Protestant Dissent. It was the Dissenting Deputies, a body of laymen, which eventually called the London ministers together, although before this action, discussion and correspondence had taken place privately.

The task which confronts the historian is to explain how a number of ministers, not exceeding one hundred and fifty, with about twenty laymen, could within a fortnight rend Nonconformity into divisions which after two centuries still remain. The event occurred in the

month of March, when according to the Old Style, the year 1718 was passing away.

It will be necessary to recall certain incidents which had influenced Nonconformity since the beginning of the century. The Protestant Dissenters had become an integral portion of the nation at the time of the Revolution, and were very powerful when the new century opened. This is the chief explanation of Queen Anne's ecclesiastical preferences, and it gives the true perspective to the reactionary episodes of the Act against Occasional Conformity, the Sacheverell Riots, and the Schism Bill. Without a shadow of disloyalty to the Throne, but with a considerable relief to their personal feelings, the Dissenters received the news of the Queen's death on the day when the Schism Bill should have come into operation.

The Convocation controversy was an event in the Church of England which had the effect of confirming the Dissenters in their own principles. It created within them an antipathy to ecclesiastical authority, which grew the more rapidly because there was no pruning hand to retard it; for the climate was favourable, and the sun had never shone so brightly upon the Dissenters before.

The incident of which Thomas Emlyn was the central figure, although it took place in Ireland, created general interest, and upon his return to London about 1705, he received much sympathy. He was the last Dissenter to suffer imprisonment for heresy (blasphemy), and his case forms the link between the old and the new way of dealing with Nonconformity.

Another event which was indirectly affecting Nonconformity was the rise of Deism. We have seen, in the previous chapter, that the Dissenters neither began this calamitous controversy nor encouraged it. It may, however, be put among one of the factors of the age, for it undoubtedly widened the horizon of intellectual thought,

and its influence is seen in such publications as "The Occasional Papers" and "The Independent Whig," to both of which the leading Dissenters were contributors. Lastly, the prevalence of heresy among the General Baptists had a limited but definite influence at this time upon Nonconformity, and the case of Matthew Caffyn (1628-1714) brought to many minds some of the theological difficulties in the orthodox scheme.

It may therefore be assumed that the thirty years which intervened between the Revolution Settlement and the Salters' Hall Synod had recorded a gradual transition, not so much to a new theology, as to a new basis for theology. The premises which at the beginning of the period had been taken for granted, no longer were tenable at the close. The spirit which animates modern science was leaving the abode in which it had been hidden for centuries, and when it did come forth in the writings of Locke and Newton there were many to welcome it, among whom were the theologians. It was in an atmosphere of unprecedented liberty of opinion that the Salters' Hall controversy began, and when it was over, the contour of Nonconformity had changed.

The date of the break-up of theological opinion among the Protestant Dissenters was 1712, in which year Dr. Samuel Clarke published his book. It illustrates both the far-reaching character of the book, as well as the scholarly character of the Nonconformist ministry, when we find that Joseph Dodson, the Presbyterian minister of Penruddock, Cumberland, and Samuel Bourn (*secundus*), the Presbyterian minister of Crook, Westmorland, were acquainted with Clarke's work almost as soon as it came out, although living in secluded villages in the north of England.

James Peirce of Newbury, Berks, was a third Presbyterian minister who had read the book, and had accepted

its conclusions. He had been educated in Holland, where the theological outlook was broader than in England, and at Cambridge, his first pastorate, he had been friendly with Whiston and Clarke. It was through Peirce that the doctrine of Presbyterianism was turned into new channels, and it finally flowed into Unitarianism at the end of the century.

A year after the publication of Clarke's book—1713—Peirce accepted an invitation to Exeter. In that city there were five congregations managed by a committee of thirteen laymen, and to which four ministers were appointed, this arrangement having been made in the year of Peirce's settlement. His colleagues were Joseph Hallett, senior, a worthy old man, who in addition to his pastorate had kept an academy for some years; John Withers, who was well-informed on the historical side of Christianity, and John Lavington, appointed two years after Peirce, who according to Peirce had no particular qualifications, but was orthodox.

Peirce denied that he brought Clarkean opinions into the city, asserting that the books of Clarke and Whiston had been secretly read, and that a few were convinced in these views before his settlement at Exeter. Whether this be so or not, he himself certainly was Clarkean when he began his ministry at Exeter, and the first sign was the alteration of the Doxology in Public Worship. He appears also to have expressed dissatisfaction with the phrase in the Apostles' Creed that had given the compilers of the Shorter Catechism some compunction. These and similar incidents disturbed the city during the winter of 1716, and in the month of May, 1717, Peirce was requested to preach on the deity of Christ, and did so a month later, upon his return from a visit to London.

About this time, several of the students of Hallett's Academy accepted Clarkean views, and the meeting-

houses of Devon and Cornwall became alarmed. For some months the subjects relating to the Trinity were freely discussed and preached upon, while pamphlets were distributed, sometimes being thrust under the shop-doors at night, and at other times being placed in the hands of the farm-servants at the market. In the month of July, 1717, an incident occurred which widened the breach between the two parties. Hubert Stogdon, a student trained at Hallett's Academy, openly professed the opinions of Clarke, and through a certificate given to him by Peirce and several others, he obtained ordination and the pastorate of a small congregation at Wookey in Somerset. The ordination of Stogdon in another county was a slight upon the Devon and Cornwall Association, and a significant change was the absence of any reference to doctrinal belief in the certificate granted.

The discussion was continued throughout the winter of 1717, and the whole of the year 1718, and in the summer of the latter year, Peirce paid another visit to London. It is evident that both parties were acquainting the London Dissenters with what was taking place at Exeter. On the last Sunday of June, 1718, John Asty, the minister of Newington Green, preached for Martin Tomkins, the minister of Stoke Newington. He delivered what he considered to be "a seasonable sermon," and referred to "damnable heresies, especially about the deity of Christ". Tomkins replied later, expressly repudiating Arianism, but adding that he would not pronounce any doctrine "heresy" until the Scriptures had pronounced it such; and the following month he resigned the pastorate.

Upon Peirce's return to Exeter, he found that the attitude towards him was less friendly. The Committee of Thirteen had also been in communication with London ministers, who had acted with admirable prudence, and

recommended the Exeter brethren to decide the matter for themselves. At the September meeting of the Devon and Cornwall Association, a formula was presented regarding the Trinity. Peirce apparently would have had no objection to sign it, had he been allowed to state the doctrine in his own way. The objection of Withers was based upon "the good old Rule of divines and lawyers, that no man is bound to accuse himself"; and he feared that the test might be "introductory to other innovations". The winter of $17\frac{18}{19}$ must have been an unpleasant one for Nonconformity, in consequence of this discussion in London, in the West, and elsewhere.

In the spring of the year $17\frac{18}{19}$, the final stage of the controversy appeared. Several communications had passed between the two parties in January, $17\frac{18}{19}$, and from them it is apparent that Nonconformity had suddenly found itself in a position of peril and difficulty. The London Ministers were afraid to go beyond the bounds of Order, not having jurisdiction over any other ministers except those in their own Association. On the other hand, the Exeter Committee thought that they were entitled to the support of the London Dissenters regarding their declaration on the necessity of separation, in case of a fundamental error, such as the denial of the Divinity of our Lord; and upon this ecclesiastical phase of the question, the London brethren were in agreement with the Exeter Committee.

At this crisis, an appeal was made by a number of London gentlemen, and at the same time there was placed before the Committee of the Two Denominations, a "Paper of Advices". There is no record of the names of these gentlemen, but we may assume that among them were those influential laymen who afterwards were present at Salters' Hall. It is clear that strong political influence was brought to bear upon the Dissenters at this

time, as may be seen in Viscount Barrington's anonymous pamphlet addressed to the Rev. John Gale, Ph.D. (1680-1721), a Baptist minister, who was in sympathy with Barrington's political ideals.[1]

It is not known how the series of meetings held at the Salters' Hall came to be called a "Synod," as it was not Presbyterial in character except, perhaps, the fact that the Chairman was designated "Moderator". The meetings were the result of the intimation by the Committee of the Two Denominations, and were both representative and collective. Nearly all the London ministers were present, including a number from the adjacent counties, but the probability is that the name "Synod" was derisively applied to the gathering, in contemporary pamphlets and in prints—one of the latter being still extant.[2]

The Synod held its first meeting on 24 February, $17\frac{18}{19}$, and more than one hundred ministers were present, in addition to a number of distinguished laymen, including Sir Harry Houghton, the eminent Lancashire Nonconformist, Sir Joseph Jekyll, Master of the Rolls, and John Shute Barrington, who was raised to the peerage in the following year.

The item on the agenda was the consideration of a letter from Exeter, but this was soon departed from, and a theological debate ensued. The conservative party succeeded, amid some disorder, in proposing a resolution on the subject of the Trinity, advocating at the same time the importance of Subscription. The result of the voting being ambiguous, a division was demanded. The progressive party went to the gallery of the meeting-house, and someone set up the cry, "You that are against

[1] "An Account of the Proceedings, etc.," 1719.

[2] Reproduced in Green's "Short History, etc." Illustrated Edition, Part XXIX, p. 1334. (Macmillan.)

Persecution, come upstairs!" Upon which, a counter-cry was given, "You that are for the Trinity, stay below!" Those who went into the gallery on this first occasion were fifty-seven in number, and fifty-three remained in the body of the meeting-house—a result which produced the famous remark by Sir Joseph Jekyll that "the Bible had it by four". The conservatives were much annoyed, and the meeting was adjourned for a week.

When the deliberations were resumed on 3 March, the conservative party demanded Subscription to the doctrine of the Trinity from each minister. Under the impression that they were in the minority, they went to the gallery, but upon Subscription taking place, it was found that they were in a majority of ten.[1] They thereupon withdrew, and the Nonsubscribing ministers continued to discuss the proposed reply to the letter from Exeter. Both parties at the February meeting had agreed upon three Articles, and the Nonsubscribers decided to adjourn for another week, as they wished, in friendliness, to consult the Subscribers about a fourth Article. The substance of the three Articles was a confirmation of the views of the Exeter Committee, that they were at liberty to secede where deviation of doctrine was observable; and a further principle of Dissent was enunciated by declaring that the people themselves had a right to judge what the errors were. These decisions were primarily opposed to the ecclesiastical bugbear of Schism, and to the fact that certain dignitaries in the Established Church were laying emphasis on Article XX, concerning the authority of the Church in matters of Faith. It will therefore be seen how the stages of this controversy (the Bangorian) were being carefully watched

[1] Both sides increased their numbers by including ministers resident some distance from London.

by those who desired to perpetuate Nonconformity in consistency with its own principles.

The last meeting of the Synod took place on 10 March, but the Subscribers were not present. A week later (17 March, $17\frac{8}{9}$), the four Articles were drawn up and sent (under the name of "Advices") with a letter to the Exeter Committee. The letter stated that the Articles were calculated for peace, so as to secure Truth together with it, and that they were approved of by a large number of principal gentlemen and citizens of London. This completed a memorable episode in the history of Nonconformity, but exactly a week before, the Exeter Committee had excluded Peirce and Withers from the Meeting-houses of Exeter.

This brief narration does not adequately convey the importance of the occasion, but it will be readily seen that a tremendous problem had been thrust upon Nonconformity. It was primarily nothing less than the full and final question of the Protestant attitude to the symbols of the Catholic Faith. Secondarily, it was the general question of the Protestant attitude on the subject of individual liberty of opinion in matters concerning religion. Let us see what answers were given by the parties to these two questions.

(1) *The Attitude to the Theological Symbols of Christendom.*—This was a question which Calvin had not anticipated, and Melanchthon had dreaded. When the English Reformers retained the Apostles' Creed with the Nicene and Athanasian formularies, they were aware that the titles were misnomers, and they were critically disposed towards certain phrases in these creeds. Notwithstanding, the Reformers accepted these venerable documents, and they remained in English Christendom without being carefully scrutinised, until Clarke's book in 1712 compelled the Nonconformists to make a

pronouncement on the subject. The free discussion of all theological topics between the years 1712 and 1719 enabled the Dissenters to adopt an attitude which was more Protestant than even that of original Protestantism, and more consistent with the Protestant principle of "the Bible only".

(2) *The Attitude on the Subject of Individual Liberty in Religion.*—The first two decades of the eighteenth century witnessed the beginning of modern Democracy, and it was natural that in the assertion of individual rights, the rights of conscience would also be claimed. A feature of the situation was the changed attitude on the part of Nonconformity to its Puritan tradition. Protestant Dissent had liberal and conservative elements in it, the one being somewhat radical, and the other somewhat retrograde. The Salters' Hall controversy contained these in varying degrees. The liberals were represented by orthodox Nonsubscribers like Oldfield, Grosvenor, Bennet, Avery and others, and the radicals of that section were the Arians. The conservatives were found among the Subscribers, the retrogrades being those who accepted the Westminster Assembly's doctrine literally. This state of affairs in London Nonconformity was characteristic of the Three Denominations throughout England, as Nonconformity at that time was mainly dependent upon the metropolis for the maintenance of its ministry and for the support of its meeting-houses.

The question of fixing the responsibility for the dissolution of Protestant Dissent which occurred at Salters' Hall frequently has been discussed, with opposite conclusions. If we take the number of ministers concerned in the dispute to be 130 (approximately), and try to give each a denominational designation, we shall find each of the Three Denominations represented among both the Subscribers and the Nonsubscribers. The

Presbyterians were the largest section among the Nonsubscribers, but they were also the largest among the Subscribers, being at least twenty-three against sixteen Independents. Nothing therefore can be found against the Presbyterian party, except that they were among the Nonsubscribers in the proportion of eight to one.

We need not discuss whether or not it was an honour to be on the one side or on the other, but we may venture to express the opinion that this century will appreciate more than the nineteenth century did, the thoroughly Protestant attitude of the Nonsubscribers. The difference between Subscribers and Nonsubscribers was chiefly upon the difficult question relating to essentials. The one party considered that the doctrine of the deity of Christ was essential, and strove to retain it and its allied doctrines in the form and even in the formularies in which it had come from the earliest Christian ages. The other party (with some exceptions) were equally convinced of the importance of the doctrine (although they preferred the word "divinity" to "deity"), but they contended that the formularies did not contain either the Scriptural or the primitive doctrine, and, consequently, they were justified in rejecting them if they felt constrained to do so. They based their argument upon the primary principle of Protestantism, that the Scriptures contained all things necessary to Salvation, the corollary being that the Scriptures were *sufficient* in matters of Faith. This argument was irresistible, and was accepted universally, with the result that charity, candour, and reasonableness spread over the theology and literature of that extraordinary century.[1]

[1] Numerous pamphlets relating to the Salters' Hall controversy, with that of Exeter, were written, and most of them will be found either at the Memorial Hall, London, or the Dr. Williams' Library.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MODERATE CALVINISTS.

THE Salters' Hall controversy put an end to denominational amity among the Dissenters. In that dispute the irritation and friction which had existed since the Antinomian controversy came to a climax, and the divergencies between the two parties became more marked. The passing references which occur to this matter suggest that for the first few years of the eighteenth century the Presbyterians were inclined to moderation and charity, an attitude which appeared Laodicean to the Independent and Baptist, some of whom were radical in everything except theology.

The Salters' Hall controversy not only destroyed co-operation between the three historic parties, but split them into units, which eventually cohered, not on the basis of polity but of doctrine. A few years after 1719, it was customary to designate a meeting-house "Presbyterian" or "Independent," not because it contained the traditional views of these two parties, but because it represented a theological characteristic which each party had acquired since the Salters' Hall Synod. This arose from the fact that the Presbyterians were mainly Non-subscribers, either Arian or Orthodox; and the Independents Subscribers, who had few if any Arians at that time. The contents of the designations "Presbyterian" and "Independent" had therefore changed, each word

no longer describing a definitely opposed polity, but a theological view to which representatives of both parties adhered.

It is important to observe that the Calvinism of Nonconformity had changed, particularly in the Presbyterian type of Nonconformity. It had no more identity with that of the Westminster Assembly than a portrait has with a person. The features were there, but the life had gone, and the descendants of that famous Assembly, whether they were found in the Established Church or among the Dissenters, were fully conscious that Calvinism like other systems, having had its day, had ceased to be. A number of events and persons were responsible for this result, which by an almost universal agreement had become unavoidable before the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Richard Baxter had modified the asperities of late seventeenth century Calvinism, and this important chronological link is discovered in a remark by Peirce of Exeter that what Enty counted an imperfection in Mr. Baxter, he reckoned an excellency.

In the "Socinian" controversy which agitated the Established Church at the close of the seventeenth century, some of the leading Dissenters had written upon the subject of the Trinity. A theory propounded by John Howe (1630-1705) met with some acceptance,[1] although Peirce came to look upon it as Tritheism. When the Salters' Hall Synod revived the Trinitarian controversy, Viscount Barrington reminded Bradbury, the leader of the orthodox party, that he had once described the Athanasian Creed as "a twirl of words, fitter for a chymist than a Christian," adding that Bradbury had now set himself up as a twirlster. These and many similar remarks make it clear that by the year 1720,

[1] "A Calm and Sober Inquiry Concerning, etc.," 1694.

Calvinism was an obsolete theological system, although it continued to be held by the older generation of ministers.

Then came the period which may be placed between 1725 and 1740, when the new intellectual atmosphere became indifferent to, and almost contemptuous of a theology which had been more tyrannical than its originators had intended. It is a fact that Conformist and Nonconformist mutually rejoiced in the freedom which at length they had found, for each was equally bound. For some years, the effect of this liberty was strongly reactionary, and resulted in a prevalence of Clarkean and Arian views.

The Salters' Hall controversy was continued by the London and Exeter Dissenters by means of pamphlets, for at least two years after the Synod. The chief topics related to the subject of the Trinity, and to the sufficiency of Scripture. It can easily be imagined that the orthodox Nonsubscribers found themselves in difficult circumstances, from the fact that it was almost impossible to separate these two questions. They might not wish to discuss the Trinity, but they could not decline to discuss a subject which was bound up with the future of Nonconformity. It is interesting to observe how Protestant Dissent rapidly became individualistic in its point of view. During the discussion, Peirce changed his opinion, by declaring in 1720 that heresy ought not to separate Christians, and pressing the conclusions of Clarke to a practical issue, he wrote :—

" I am, as you know, at a greater distance from Arianism than any of the furious zealots for orthodoxy; but I hope I would embrace the stake rather than have a hand in defeating the success of any man's ministry on account of his differing from me . . . holding that the sacred Scriptures should be universally allowed to be the

Rule of Faith, and every man indulged in a free pursuit of Truth. The Reformation was built on this foundation, and under the influence only of the same notion can the superstructure be raised."

It was to be expected that Barrington, the lawyer and statesman, would emphasise the broader aspect of the subject:—

"The question is not on the Trinity, or on any points of Faith, but whether any human interpretations should be made a test of Christian communion, or (whether) a particular form of expression only used, which is in the inspired writings."

Barrington, like other leading Nonsubscribers, recognised the inspiration of Scripture, and regarding a Creed as an *interpretation* of Scripture, wished to have only the words of Scripture themselves.

Enty, the orthodox opponent of Peirce at Exeter, accepting the sufficiency of Scripture, pointed out that Peirce had likewise accepted the first Article of the Church of England (on the Trinity) according to the terms of the Act of Toleration, implying at the same time his belief in that Article as a part of Scripture. He asked the question which neither Peirce nor his party faced, whether a candidate for ordination would receive it, if he stated that he had come to the opinion of Socinus, after having examined Scripture.

There were two groups among the Nonsubscribers, and the same almost might be said of the Subscribers. The Nonsubscribers gradually came to represent heresy on the subject of the Trinity, which, beginning from Clarkean Christology ultimately ended in a Socinian one. There were also among them moderate Calvinists who did not attempt to interpret literally the historical standards, but accepted the substance of their teaching.

On the other hand, the Subscribers appear to have

accepted the thoroughly Protestant and Nonconformist position of the sufficiency of Scripture, and this had the effect of making the orthodox Subscriber scarcely distinguishable from the orthodox Nonsubscriber. Subscription was not imposed upon the ministers of the meeting-houses, except in isolated cases, but wherever it was demanded, it was accompanied with an anti-Arian and an ultra-Calvinistic theology.

The Moderate Calvinists differed in almost every individual case, but a common characteristic was their tacit repudiation of the views expressed in the Westminster Assembly documents on Justification, Satisfaction, and Election, with the result that their theological horizon was usually wide in extent. There was no attempt to attack the Confession of Faith and the two Catechisms, or to blame those who had drawn them up in a time of deep theological stress. The Moderate Calvinists were eminently practical and reasonable men, and to such men as Calamy, Watts, Doddridge, Ridgley, and Simon Browne, the subject was one which they could afford to treat in a calm and academic manner.

Although the Moderate Calvinists recognised that in the traditional view they were dealing with something as obsolete as the pikes, jacks, and halberds of the Roundheads, yet they gave much anxious consideration to the subject. They did not attack the Athanasian Creed, but they did not attempt to defend it, and their view generally was a modified form of the doctrine in that standard. Edmund Calamy, who had been a "neutral" during the Salters' Hall controversy, said that he was quite satisfied with the phrases which had been accepted by the Reformed Churches on that subject, but he did not think his love should be withheld from those who had no definite meaning for the word "Substance"; and to reject or exclude them would be to have a zeal not

according to knowledge.[1] A similar view was expressed by Thomas Reynolds, D.D., and Joshua Oldfield, D.D., two London ministers, the sweet reasonableness of John Locke being noticeable in Oldfield, who had been friendly with the philosopher.

An important distinction was made by Benjamin Bennett, the Presbyterian minister of Newcastle-on-Tyne, who preferred to discuss what he called "the disputed parts of the Trinity". He remarked that Clarke's scheme had as many difficulties as the Arian scheme itself, but in his opinion the whole subject was not fundamental, and certainly was not essential to Salvation.[2]

The leaders of the party became conscious of the freedom which their own principles implied, and Dr. Benjamin Grosvenor expressed what came to be the acknowledged attitude on these subjects :—

" If we would prevent the mischief done in the world, and the horrid scandals to the Christian name, by religious cruelty, it must be by better information ; preventing such opinions taking possession of the minds of men ; and this ought to be done as soon as possible by all proper methods. The whole earth should conspire together in this design for the good of mankind, for the sake of Peace and Truth : that no man should ever be injured in his life or property for the sake of his religion, if it be no part of his religion to injure others on a religious account. If it be, religion suffers nothing in treating such a man as the public good requires. This is what parents and tutors should early implant, ministers should teach, and magistrates ordain. Orators and poets should employ all the force of their eloquence and charm to persuade it, till it becomes as universally acknowledged

[1] " Thirteen Sermons Concerning the Doctrine, etc.," 1722.
[2] " Irenicum," 1722.

as a first principle: till a man might travel with his own religion and conscience about him, as safely through the whole world as every traveller wishes to do with his money, and as every man wishes for himself that he might do with his own conscience and religion. And why should not the Golden Rule here take place as much as anywhere, 'to do to others as you would be done unto'? Is there any case in the world wherein it is more a golden one?"

From the year 1720, approximately, four different types of theology appeared among the Dissenters. The first was the orthodox, which attempted to maintain the traditional position upon all the subjects included in the historical doctrinal standards. The representatives of this party were mainly the Subscribers of Salters' Hall and those who adhered to their position. During the winter of 1730-31, a weekly Lecture was delivered by some of them at Lime Street Meeting-house, London, by Abraham Taylor, D.D., Thomas Bradbury, Peter Goodwin, John Gill, D.D., and others. In an excellent sermon by Taylor on "The Decay of Practical Religion," he states the views of his opponents thus:—

"The enemies have for some years been endeavouring to rob Christ and the Holy Spirit of the glory of their supreme divinity, and to reduce them to the rank of creatures; and now men grow bold in error. They are forward to deny their Personality, and to make them only attributes, powers, and names of the Father."

The second type was found among the Nonsubscribers, and was represented by the older men like Dr. Oldfield, Dr. Grosvenor, Dr. Wright, Dr. Hunt, and others, who maintained the orthodox opinion regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, but who had an open mind on the subject of Calvinistic theology. The third type was also found among the Nonsubscribers, and was represented by the

younger ministers, such as George Smyth of Hackney, Samuel Chandler, and Moses Lowman. These men represented the new school of thought in Dissent, which had arisen since the publication of Clarke's "Scripture Doctrine," and adopting this writer's views on that subject, they inevitably had a different estimate of the Westminster Assembly's standards.

The fourth type represented what may be described as the "Moderate Calvinists". Simon Browne, a Non-subscriber, belongs to this group. He wrote, at the time of the Salters' Hall controversy, several sensible pamphlets, pointing out in one of them that his diffidence in giving up the orthodox view of the Trinity arose from the fatal consequences which would follow upon a rejection of it, particularly on the subjects of the worship of Christ and of the doctrine of Satisfaction. In his opinion, each party should bear with the other; and separation or excommunication should not take place on account of different sentiments.

Similar in spirit was the view of John Jennings of Kibworth, the tutor of Doddridge. He imbued his pupils with a love of research, and he encouraged candid and liberal sentiments on doctrinal matters. Although his own views were moderately Calvinistic, he urged his pupils to take their doctrine from the Bible, and the result was that most of his students who entered the ministry maintained a *via media* on the subjects in dispute.

The moderate Calvinists differed in degree with regard to their adherence to the Calvinistic theology. They cannot be classified, but the names of several may be mentioned. Dr. David Jennings (1691-1762), a brother of John Jennings, was a good example of a Dissenter of the Moderate school. Dr. Savage said that Jennings called no man "master," but was a jealous

asserter of the rights of private judgment, in opposition to human creeds and human establishments of religion. His sentiments came nearest Calvinism, as what he thought to be in the main the obvious doctrine of Scripture.

Thomas Ridgley, D.D. (1667?-1734), was a Calvinist, but his learned work on the Assembly's Larger Catechism proves that even the orthodox position in some points had to be qualified through the events which had taken place. Ridgley advocated that the doctrine of the Trinity was not contrary to Reason, although above it. He pointed out the difficulty of reconciling Christ's character as Redeemer, Governor of the world, Judge of the quick and the dead, with inferior ideas of his deity. The whole argument, which is well sustained, is to show that the doctrine of the Trinity is not exposed to greater difficulties than any contrary doctrine would be.

Many other names could be mentioned of those who avoided the disputed parts of Christian theology and rested in a middle scheme, but the only other name which need be referred to is that of Isaac Watts, D.D. (1674-1748). He was educated at Stoke Newington Academy, and after acting for a time as assistant to Isaac Chauncy, at Mark Lane, he became pastor of that important meeting-house in 1702. In 1713, he received Samuel Price as colleague, and from that time he acted as chaplain to Sir Thomas and Lady Abney.

Watts did not appear in the Salters' Hall controversy, but in a list of "Nonsubscribers" or "Neutrals," issued afterwards, his name was given. Three years after that eventful Synod he published his views, remarking that he was willing (with reference to the Mohammedanism of those countries) to leave the Christian doctrine upon the subject of the Trinity to the judgment of a Turk or

an Indian.[1] The remark was immediately taken up by Martin Tomkins, the Arian minister of Stoke Newington, who complimented Watts upon a spirit "different from any of his party".

Watts' services to eighteenth century Dissent can scarcely be overestimated. His Psalms and Hymns were a unique and precious contribution to Christian England, and he and Philip Doddridge were the most distinguished Dissenting ministers of their time. His theological sentiments were not orthodox, and had to be defended as late as the nineteenth century. His "assumption" theory was not original, but it became the view of the orthodox party, although not agreeing with the traditional creeds. In it he amplified the idea that the Incarnation existed eternally, either in the decree of God, or in reality; or in the sense that God was united with a human soul, even before the creation of the world. Christ was "assumed" by God as an organ, prior to the world, and through it (*sic*) all things were created.[2]

[1] "The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity," 1722.
[2] "The Glory of Christ as, etc.," 1746.

CHAPTER VII.

PHILIP DODDRIDGE AND HIS FRIENDS.

A GROUP of men who powerfully influenced Nonconformity in the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century, were those who followed a practical and evangelical type of preaching. The leader of them was Philip Doddridge, who in his short but successful life did more for orthodox Nonconformity than any of his contemporaries, not excepting Watts.

Doddridge had a pedigree that would have been considered honourable if wealth had accompanied it, for one of his grandfathers was an ejected vicar, and the other a German minister who had settled in England in the seventeenth century, "having quitted a considerable estate, and all his friends for liberty of conscience". Doddridge's father was an oilman in the city of London, who died when his son was entering his teens. Philip was the last of twenty children, and at his birth was thrown aside as dead; but one who was present perceived him breathing, and taking him up, saved his little life.

The consumptive boy grew up with the knowledge of religion implanted within him. Doddridge used to relate in after years how his mother, before he could read, taught him the stories of the Bible, with the assistance of some Dutch tiles in the chimney of the room where they usually sat, and left impressions "which never wore out".

From the time of his father's death he found a friend in Samuel Clarke, the Dissenting minister of St. Albans.

Before he was fourteen he was an orphan, and it was to Clarke that he owed so much at this time of his life, and subsequently. At about the age of sixteen, he was admitted to the Lord's Table at the St. Alban's Meeting-house, and this greatly deepened his religious life. The crisis in Doddridge's life occurred when he decided to enter the Dissenting ministry. The Duchess of Bedford had taken an interest in the youth, and had offered to pay the cost of his education if he would enter the Established Church, promising him also a living when he had taken Orders. Doddridge's heart was set upon the Dissenting ministry, but he had no money to carry him through an academy. In his distress he consulted Dr. Calamy, who did not encourage him. We have only Doddridge's account of the interview, but it is possible that his delicate appearance made Calamy look with pity upon a penniless youth who desired to enter the ministry at a time when the burden of it was beginning to be felt. We may be certain that Calamy's judgment was honest and sincere, and about the same time he was showing kindness to George Benson, who afterwards became a celebrated Arian minister, but, recalling the splendid career of Doddridge, the incident is a perpetual warning to those who take too academic a view of ministerial training. Again, Clarke became his friend and patron. Doddridge took the letter from the hand of the postman, and read it as an answer from Heaven to his prayer for guidance.

Seven months after the Salters' Hall Synod, he was placed in the Academy of John Jennings, at Kibworth, Leicestershire. The methods and influence of this teacher were lasting in their impression, and Doddridge became an eager student. When he entered the academy he had a good knowledge of Latin, and he began to devote more attention to Greek. French literature was also studied,

especially the homiletic works. He had a faculty of absorbing books, and in addition to the academical lectures he read more than one hundred books in the first year. He gave much time to the consideration of preaching, and by rules of thought, conduct, and speech, cultivated a high ideal of the Christian ministry. He divested himself of the traditional characteristics of an English Nonconformist minister, and he and his students contributed a new and distinctive tradition to the meeting-houses of England. After three years in Kibworth Academy, years in which he entered into everything with the zest of life, he began his ministry at twenty years of age, by preaching his first sermon to a congregation at Hinckley, not far from Kibworth. He received several invitations from other congregations, and to a friend who had written him a letter of condolence he replied :—

"Here I stick, close to those delightful studies which a favourable Providence has made the business of my life. One day passeth away after another, and I only know that it passeth pleasantly with me. As for the world about me, I have very little concern with it. I live almost like a tortoise shut in its shell, almost always in the same town, the same house, the same chamber, yet I live like a prince, not indeed in the pomp of greatness, but the pride of liberty ; master of my books, master of my time, and I hope I may add, master of myself."

Nearly seven years were spent by Doddridge in this profitable manner, and during that time his acceptability with the Protestant Dissenters increased. In the spring of the year 1729, the Rev. David Some of Market Harborough—a man much valued in this county—in an address at a meeting of ministers upon the subject of revival of religion, proposed that an Academy should be started at Market Harborough, and that Doddridge should be

invited to take charge of it. Doddridge consented, and after consultation with Dr. Samuel Wright of London, and advice and help from other friends, he began with two or three pupils in the summer of 1729. A few months afterwards, upon his acceptance of a "Call" to Castle Gate, Northampton, the Academy was removed to that town. From that time until the close of his career Doddridge remained in this pastorate, filling his days with study, preaching, and literary work, and performing an enormous service for the cause of Evangelical religion in England.

Job Orton, one of his students, and afterwards his biographer, gives full particulars of Doddridge's pastoral and academical work. When a young man, Doddridge told a friend that he had resolved never to meddle with the controversy on the Trinity, and Orton states that in the pulpit Doddridge seldom referred to controversial matters. During the twenty-two years in which Doddridge continued his Academy, about two hundred students were educated there, and about one hundred and twenty entered the Dissenting ministry.

The story of his closing days is pathetic. In the month of December, 1750, he travelled to St. Albans to preach the funeral sermon for his dear friend and benefactor, Clarke. He caught a cold which settled on him, and which returned with renewed force the following summer. Realising his physical weakness, Doddridge made his Will, and instead of the preamble which had been conventional since Puritan days, he inserted the following:—

"Whereas it is customary on these occasions to begin with commending the soul into the hands of God through Christ, I do it; not in mere form, but with sincerity and joy, esteeming it my greatest happiness that I taught and encouraged to it by that glorious

Gospel, which having most assuredly believed, I have spent my life in preaching to others; and which I esteem an infinitely greater treasure than all my little worldly store or possessions—ten thousand times greater than mine."

His last sermon to the congregation was delivered in the month of July, 1751, when he preached upon the text, "Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's". His friend, John Barker of Walthamstow, sent a letter which deeply affected him:—

"Stay Doddridge! O stay and strengthen our hands, whose shadows grow long. Fifty is but the height of vigour, usefulness, and honour. Don't take leave abruptly. Providence hath not directed thee yet on whom to drop thy mantle. Who shall instruct our youth, fill our vacant churches, animate our Associations, and diffuse a spirit of piety, moderation, candour, and charity through our villages, and a spirit of supplication into our towns and cities when thou art removed from us? Especially, who shall unfold the sacred oracles, teach us the meaning and use of our Bibles, rescue us from the bondage of systems, party opinions, empty, useless speculations, and fashionable forms and phrases, and point us to the simple, intelligible, consistent, uniform religion of our Lord and Saviour? Who shall—but I am silenced by the voice of Him Who says, 'shall I not do what I will with my own?'"

Doddridge left Bristol in the month of September, 1751, and took ten days to get to Falmouth. At the beginning of October he left for Lisbon, and the discomforts of the voyage may be imagined, as it took another fortnight from Falmouth to Lisbon. He passed away a few days after arrival, and was buried in the English cemetery of that city, closing a career of religious zeal that was unusually intense.

There is no minister of eighteenth century Nonconformity who approaches nearer the modern ideal than Philip Doddridge. His theological views were broader than those of traditional orthodoxy. He gave a new setting to Evangelicalism, and he placed the Christian mysteries in a light that was both rational and reverent. His superior grasp of the principles of Christianity, his passion for practical religion, and his loyalty to the spirit of Protestant Dissent, made him a distinguished leader of that party. His literary work gained him admirers in royal households, and his most popular work met with an equal reception from Conformist and Nonconformist alike.

The students of Doddridge were stamped with the same ideals of their tutor, and wherever the name of a minister trained by Doddridge is found in the meeting-houses of England, the record is that of a high, honourable, practical evangelical ministry. Several of his students went beyond their tutor in theological views, but retained his spirit, and an illustration of this was Philip Holland of Bolton. It was in men like Benjamin Fawcett of Kidderminster, Hugh Farmer of Walthamstow, and in his friend, biographer and admirer, Job Orton, that the Doddridge spirit in Nonconformity lingered for a quarter of a century after Doddridge himself had departed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ARIAN MOVEMENT.

A PECULIAR feature of English Christianity in the eighteenth century, was its association with heresies which for ages had been silent and apparently vanquished. The names of Eusebius, Arius, and Novatian, with those heretics of a later age like Socinus and Arminius, awoke in the dusty tomes where they had slept for centuries, and came to life again in the theological literature of the eighteenth century.

The Act of Toleration gave no legal exemption from the penalties attached to the deniers of the Trinity, but this disability did not prevent the publication of anti-Trinitarian works, as "The Socinian Tracts" prove. The liberalising influences came to England from Holland, where many English youths were trained, particularly at Utrecht and Leyden. Calamy has left an interesting account of the time he spent there from the beginning of the year 1688, and it is evident that an eclectic type of theology was being evolved both in that country and in England.[1] We may therefore look to the Dissenting ministers who studied in Holland, including Howe, Calamy, Shower, Nathanael Taylor, and Reynolds as the source of Moderate Calvinism, which preceded Arianism.

It was in an incidental way that the name of the famous heretic of the fourth century came to be revived in England, and to be permanently connected with a

[1] "An Historical Account of My Own Life," Vol. I, pub. 1829.

momentous period of Nonconformity. It was not through Dr. Samuel Clarke, who expressly disavowed Arianism in Proposition XVI of his book :—

"They therefore have also justly been censured, who taking upon them to be wise above what is written, and intruding into things which they have not seen, have presumed to affirm that there was a time when the Son was not."

The identification of Clarke's system with that of Arius appeared to have originated on March 9, $17\frac{18}{19}$. On that day, a tract was circulated through the city of Exeter entitled "Arius Detected," the effect of which was such that Peirce and Withers were excluded from the meeting-houses on the following day. A few days afterwards, Peirce preached a sermon in which he remarked, "Arians it seems we must be, because they will have it so; and yet if I may use St. Paul's reasoning, there's no one soul among us that ever imagines Arius was crucified for us".

It was Daniel Waterland (1683-1740), a clergyman of the Established Church, who gave the word a permanent association with the Clarkean party, by writing a pamphlet on what he called the Arian Subscription. It is an illustration of the practice, not unfamiliar in these days, of hindering an opponent by giving him a name which will be recognised as a term of reproach. It is only fair to point out that much of the opposition to the Clarkean scheme arose from the fact that people accepted the customary appellation, and ranked it with Arian Christology.

Clarke and his followers preferred to call it the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity. They however used expressions like "the Inferiority" and "the Subordination Scheme," by which they meant that Christ was subordinate to the Father, not in nature, nor in time, but from the fact that the Father, being the Supreme Cause, retained

the incommunicable powers of Supremacy and Independence.

It is an extraordinarily interesting fact in English theology, that the heretical tendencies of the eighteenth century owe their origin to a single book. It was a fateful day when Samuel Clarke (1675-1729) went to Cambridge, shortly after the Revolution. His metaphysical mind was soon turned to the problems of theology, in which latter realm he was destined to take an enduring place.

It was a fortunate circumstance for Samuel Clarke, that one day he met William Whiston (1667-1752) in a coffee-house at Norwich. Both men were interested in the subject of Physics, and a few years later Whiston succeeded Newton at Cambridge. At the time when he met Clarke, Whiston was a Suffolk rector, and it was through his recommendation to the Bishop of Norwich that Clarke received preferment, ultimately becoming the Rector of St. James's, Westminster.

The story of Clarke's famous Boyle Lectures is well known, together with other incidents in his career. The thing to be noted at present is his connexion with the Arian Movement in England, and particularly his profound influence upon the Protestant Dissenters. It appears that Clarke first drew Whiston's attention to the fact that the doctrine of the Athanasian Creed was not the doctrine of the primitive writers. Newton had apparently been aware of this earlier, but Whiston thought that Clarke discovered it for himself. Whiston gave some attention to the subject, and came to the conclusion that the primitive doctrine was "Eusebian, commonly called Arian". He located the primitive doctrine in the Eusebian creeds preserved by Athanasius.

These opinions caused much discussion, and the authorities of Cambridge University wished to avoid a re-

petition of the " Socinian " controversy at Oxford, twenty years before. They therefore took immediate action, and expelled Whiston from the Chair, on 30 October, 1710. This greatly affected Clarke, who, although different in calibre and view from Whiston, was following the latter in his consistent search for theological truth. He had promised Whiston that he would write, and at length, in the year 1712, he published a work which may be regarded as one of the finest pieces of constructive theology produced in the eighteenth century. An acute controversy followed, in which Convocation eventually succeeded in silencing Clarke, but the book continued its circulation, meeting with wide acceptance.

The title of the book was seductive, especially to the Dissenters, as it suggested a contrast between the ecclesiastical and the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity. It is a noteworthy feature of the Clarkean party at that time that they believed in a doctrine of the Trinity, but not in the doctrine contained in the Athanasian Creed. In the year of the Salters' Hall Synod, and probably shortly after that event, Clarke published a second edition of his book. There must have been some satisfaction to him in knowing that although he had been compelled to yield to ecclesiastical pressure, his opinions were accepted by many clergymen. Their acceptability with the Dissenters was complete. All of them did not adopt his views, but none of them assailed them, and the criticism which came from the Nonconformists was of a mild and academic kind.

The Arian Movement in England revolved round the scheme of Clarke. The Athanasian Creed continued to be the theological bulwark against Christological heresy, but not much attachment was shown to that document during the eighteenth century. Had Clarke's view confined itself to an alteration of the disputable theological phrases in the Athanasian Creed, instead of propounding

an entirely new scheme, the probability is that it would have been entirely successful. Clarke's view displaced that of the Athanasian Creed, but it also had the effect of drawing criticism off that document. In a few years' time Clarke's cautious propositions failed to meet the demands of the sceptical age, and many advanced to the real Arian position. After that it was an easy transition from Arianism to Socinianism.

The descent to heterodoxy is swift, after the first step has been taken. In no other department of theology is this so true as it is on the subject of the deity of Christ, and indifference to theology will inevitably appear when this cardinal doctrine of Christology has been broken.

The "Socinian" controversy although primarily taking place in the Established Church, had affected the Dissenters considerably, one result of it being the Antinomian controversy. Without this latter controversy the Trinitarian controversy would never have proceeded so rapidly. The chief solvent, however, was the spirit of the age, which suddenly laid aside the theological disputes of many generations. Religion and Theology became two distinct things, and this was quite a novelty for those days.

From the close of the Salters' Hall, there followed a long period of theological inquiry, leading to negative results. The Church of England tried to forget her XXXIX Articles, but among the Dissenters the Westminster Assembly's documents were thoroughly criticised. From about the year 1735, Dissent was divided into three parties, the orthodox (mainly Independent), the liberal (Independent and Presbyterian), and the heterodox (mainly Presbyterian). The orthodox were inclined to contract in theological view, but between the liberal and the heterodox there was a certain degree of agreement. The situation is described by John Barker of Hackney, in a letter written to his friend Philip Doddridge :—

"The disposition to Charity continues amongst us Protestant Dissenters, but I cannot say much as to our Faith. Some charge our fathers with putting believing in the place of doing; I wish we do not put giving in the place of believing. The defection of our younger ministers I greatly lament, and if the people departed from the doctrines of the Reformation as much as their ministers, I should begin to think whether ours was an interest worth serving . . . the Dissenting Interest is not like itself—I hardly know it. It used to be famous for faith, holiness, and love. I knew the time when I had no doubt into whatever place of worship I went among Dissenters, but that my heart would be warmed and comforted, and my edification promoted. Now, I hear prayers and sermons which I neither relish nor understand. Evangelical truth and duty are quite old-fashioned things."

English Arianism had no recognised standard of theology, the ministers adopting individual views on the subject. The transition to heterodoxy was a gradual process, and for a time Nonconformity was composed of curious theological elements. Sometimes, a particular type of doctrine was prolonged at a particular meeting-house by means of a long ministry. The Clarkeans were rarely aggressive, and continued their ministry on the traditional basis, giving a preference to practical sermons, and not referring to current controversy. Of this class Henry Grove of Taunton (1684-1738) and Samuel Bourn (1689-1754) are good examples.

One of the most eminent scholars of the Arian Movement was Nathaniel Lardner, D.D. (1684-1768). He was one of a group of English students who returned from Utrecht and Leyden, with changed theological views. Tomkins, the minister of Stoke Newington, had been with Lardner in Holland, and the latter's first sermon was preached in Stoke Newington pulpit. This occurred nine years before

Tomkins openly avowed Clarkean views, and the incident illustrates how the Arminian theology was preparing the way for Clarkean opinions.

Lardner's reputation was made as a writer and not as a preacher, extreme deafness, among other deficiencies, preventing him from becoming widely acceptable. For about thirty years he laboured at a monumental work, the object of which was to "confirm the facts occasionally mentioned in the New Testament, by passages of ancient authors who were contemporary with our Saviour or his Apostles, or lived near their time".

Lardner's scholarship was of great service to the Arian Movement in England, particularly through an interesting incident which occurred. The publication of his first two volumes of "The Credibility" attracted the attention of Viscount Barrington, who in the years 1727 and 1728 entered into correspondence with Lardner. In 1725, Barrington had published a volume which reflected the ideals of John Locke, with whom he had some acquaintance. In one of his letters to Lardner, Barrington had expressed the opinion that although the Logos was a divine part of Jesus, the theory of the pre-existence of the soul of Jesus was "a groundless conceit". It was in reply to this and similar remarks that Lardner sent a letter to Barrington, expressing a view which he called the Nazarene doctrine of the Logos, as distinct from the Ebionite, which rejected the miraculous conception. This letter was written in 1730, and although the MS. was shown to his friend Tomkins, the contents were not made public until 1759.

Lardner had gradually been developing a Socinian view, and had supported the opinion of Moses Lowman that the Logos was only an angel in the Schekinah, and that Christ was a person in whom the Word dwelt, or "schekinized".

The publication of the Logos letter in 1759 marked the culmination of the Arian Movement in England, and the appearance of eighteenth-century Socinianism, which, unlike that of the seventeenth century, became equivalent to a Humanitarian view of Christ. Priestley read Lardner's letter, and became a Socinian, but it had the effect of confirming in his Arianism a well-known scholar, Edward Harwood, D.D. (1729-94).

Lardner is a good illustration of the type of theological progression which was common in the eighteenth century. He derived his results from a critical study of the Scriptures, and disregarded theological dogma. Many of the Arian scholars were indebted to him, especially George Benson, D.D. (1699-1762), a native of the Cumberland village of Great Salkeld, and a representative of an ancient Presbyterian family in that county. Like Viscount Barrington, Benson was a disciple of Locke, and in his interpretation of the Scriptures he separated the phrases from meanings which Calvinism and Protestantism had given them. The result was to create new definitions, as, for example, when he described Faith as the root or principle of a holy life, working by Love, and producing the excellent fruit of righteousness or of holiness. John Taylor, D.D. (1694-1761), a friend and fellow-student of Benson, did not proceed on the broad principles of Locke as Benson had done, but accomplished more than his friend by making a thorough examination of the Scripture doctrines of Sin and Atonement—two cardinal points in Protestant theology.

Taylor's works had a profound effect and displaced the older theology in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America. Notwithstanding the effect of his work, Taylor himself was conservative in theology, and viewed with sadness the appearance of Socinianism among the Dissenters. It was in anticipation of what was about to

befall Protestant Dissent, that he wrote a "Scripture Account of Prayer," shortly before his death, which was a reply to the advanced position taken up by "The Liverpool Liturgy".

The theological changes which took place among the English Dissenters after the middle of the century may be traced to Scotland. The students on the English Presbyterian Fund were sent to Glasgow University, and there came in contact with Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746). It was his philosophy together with the theology of William Leechman at the same University, which brought a new current of intellectual ideas into the meeting-houses of England. This fact may be illustrated by observing the names of the ministers who were prominent in English Dissent from the beginning of the second half of the century. Bourn of Norwich, Seddon of Warrington, Thomas Hollis, a wealthy layman, and Holland of Bolton had been students of Hutcheson, and they endeavoured to give a fresh interpretation to Christianity through his philosophy. The last-named was so attached to Hutcheson's ideas that he insisted upon saying God was "eternally, infinitely, unchangeably good". The most popular exponent of Hutcheson's views in England was James Foster, D.D. (1697-1753), a Baptist minister, whose Sunday Evening Lectures at the Barbican Meeting-house attracted much attention. Pope praised him for excelling ten "Metropolitans" in preaching well, but an even higher tribute is found in an account of a service at his meeting-house by a young man who had been drawn there out of curiosity.

It is an interesting fact that although England derived much support for her ideas on theology and polity from Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, yet Scotland was almost entirely dependent on England for her theology in the eighteenth century. Hutcheson and

Leechman were followers of Samuel Clarke, and John Simson of the same University had been heterodox. The correspondence between Leechman and Dr. John Taylor, the visit of Leechman to England, and the work of Leechman's students, Beverley of Hull, Walker of Leeds, and Cappe of York, illustrate the close connexion between the Arians of England and the "Moderates" of Scotland. A further proof of the cordial relationships is seen in the fact that the Scottish Universities granted a number of honorary degrees to the leading English Dissenters.

Much of this change had been brought about by extraneous events, rather than by a demolition of the old doctrine. It arose not from a discovery that Calvinistic theology was in itself untrue, but that the presuppositions and premises upon which Calvinism was built were no longer tenable. Deism was defeated, but in the struggle the defenders of Revealed Religion had to use new weapons, and when the battle was over, the earlier ones had become obsolete. The success of Foster, Bourn of Norwich, and Hugh Farmer of Walthamstowe shows that the apologetic type of preaching was what the age required. The careful examination of the subject of Miracles by Farmer, a conservative theologian, prepared the way for bolder speculation. It was along this path that historic Nonconformity travelled, until the culmination was reached.

The philosophy of Hutcheson at length prevailed over the Calvinistic theology, and even over the Clarkean theology of Leechman and Taylor. The latter endeavoured to retard the Scottish philosophy, but without avail. The climax was reached not so much by a general movement as through particular events. The early exponents of Socinianism were John Seddon of Manchester (one of the earliest), Paul Cardale of Evesham, and Caleb Fleming of London.

Theology and Philosophy converged in the formation of that remarkable institution, the Warrington Academy. Its first theological tutor was Dr. John Aikin, the son of a London Scotsman, and the father of a talented family. Seddon, the "rector" of the Academy, was one of Hutcheson's students, and it was mainly through him that the "Liverpool Liturgy" originated. All the names of this eminent group of tutors are however eclipsed by that of Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). Priestley is a unique example of theological progression, in the history of eighteenth-century Nonconformity. He was brought up in a home where his father was a Calvinist, but not a bigoted one. His "excellent aunt" was Calvinistic in principle, but welcomed orthodox and heterodox to her home. In this way young Priestley became acquainted with heretical opinions, and because he would not give his assent to the New Birth, membership at the local meeting-house was withheld from him.

It is not surprising therefore that he entered Daventry Academy as an Arminian, and left as an Arian. In his first pastorate at Needham Market he parted with much, and in his second at Nantwich, he again lightened his theological burden. The appointment at Warrington Academy was congenial to him, where, in his time at least, nothing beyond Arianism was taught. After two years in his next pastorate at Mill Hill, Leeds—that is, in 1769—he became "what is called a Socinian". Having passed through the whole range of Christological heresy, and having been influenced by the teaching of David Hartley, he finally became "a philosophic unitarian" about 1775. This was the very year in which good old Job Orton, writing to a young friend, said, "things look dark; I am sorry for you who are entering on life, and for posterity, but I have just done with the world".

The influence of Priestley cannot be over-estimated

at this stage of Nonconformist history. His agreeable personality, scientific reputation, clear, if not erudite grasp of the principles of religion, all gave him an opportunity of furthering his views with much success. It is particularly important to observe, however, that Priestley's Unitarianism bore no resemblance to that "Unitarianism" which had appeared in the Church of England at the close of the seventeenth century, or to that form of Unitarianism which became familiar in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MEETING-HOUSES.

WHEN licences were permitted by the Indulgence of 1672, nearly 1500 were issued. The designation of "Presbyterian" was attached to about half of these, the other half consisting of "Congregational and Baptist," the former being more in number. Many of the places licensed were farm-kitchens and similar unattractive rooms. When the Act of Toleration legalised these places of worship, advantage was taken to improve them, and in many places to build plain but pleasing meeting-houses. There was little attempt to imitate an architectural style or period, and many of the buildings more nearly resembled barns than basilicas. The original meeting-houses were not built until the eighteenth century had begun, as the idea of Comprehension was not entirely given up in the seventeenth century. From the Revolution Settlement until about 1705, the old licensed places of meeting were used, and it was not until the advent of the new century that the meeting-house era began.

Time has altered the towns in which many of the meeting-houses were erected, which to-day are found mainly in quiet and dingy streets which have lost the respectability and dignity they enjoyed in the eighteenth century. This is the more correct explanation of the situation of some of these meeting-houses than the one usually given to the effect that they were purposely placed in obscure streets to escape observation. This may have been true regarding the barns, farm-kitchens,

sail-lofts, brew-houses, and other rooms which were used before the Act of Toleration, but it did not apply to the eighteenth-century places of worship. It is a fact that the meeting-houses were subjected to attack, in the Sacheverell Riots in London, and in the march of the Rebels through Lancashire in 1715, and again in that county in the 1745 Rebellion, but these were temporary incidents in the history of Nonconformity.

The property of the meeting-house was legally vested in the trustees, who were expected to hold it on behalf of the congregation. The practice of the eighteenth century appears to have been such that the trustees not only acted in their legal capacity, but took charge of those affairs in the congregation which are regulated in modern Nonconformity by office-bearers.

The ejection of Peirce at Exeter was a crucial incident, inasmuch as it proved the power of trustees to exclude the minister, and to defy the congregation. On the one hand, Peirce maintained that the meeting-house was built at the common charge, and that the trustees were made proprietors for Form sake, the Law making it necessary that the property should be vested in some person. He added that if the trustees had the right they claimed, it was equivalent to the perpetual advowson of a living, which state of things would bring to an end the principles which the Dissenters had always pretended to hold.

On the other hand, the Exeter trustees maintained that the congregation did not own the property, that it had not paid one-half to the cost of it, and that the reason why they had not called the congregation together was because they thought the question was too vital for the congregation to decide.[1]

[1] In Calamy's opinion, the Trustees exceeded their powers, and a vote of the congregation should have been taken. Quoted by Mr. Gordon in his article on Joseph Hallet in *D.N.B.*

In the famous Lady Hewley case, which began in the early part of the nineteenth century, the question of trustees was a vital element in the case. An examination of the data produced at that trial makes it clear that the trustees, no less than the minister, were responsible for that transition which took place quietly in the eighteenth century, whereby much property passed from orthodox to heterodox hands. It is significant that between the years 1725 and 1740, when Dissent was moving to a new theological phase, many new meeting-houses were built on the old sites and new trustees were appointed.

The congregation consisted of those who came together for Worship, although this term had little of its modern meaning, and the Service chiefly consisted of instruction, in the form of a lecture or discourse. The congregation consisted of members, seat-holders, and adherents, the last-named sometimes being from the Established Church. At a later stage, financial subscribers appear to have been important factors.

It is not possible to make a distinction between "congregation" and "Church," as Doddridge and others used these words synonymously. It may be said approximately, that the former was preferred by the Presbyterian party, and the latter by those who called themselves Congregational.[1]

The organisations of a modern congregation were undreamt of, and office-bearers are rarely mentioned. The dullness of a service in the Established Church in the eighteenth century has been immortalised by Hogarth's caricature of "The Sleepy Congregation," which exaggerates but does not misrepresent what appears to have been the normal condition of church life

[1] Mr. Gordon thinks that "Society" was the favourite term with the Presbyterians.

in the first half of the eighteenth century. Somnolence and sanctity were frequently found together, both in the Church of England where the sermons were ethical, and in the meeting-houses where the sermons were chiefly doctrinal. Mrs. Gilbert has left a charming account of the meeting-house at Lavenham, Norfolk, in the year 1786, but it is not typical of many meeting-houses at that period:—

"The rector and curate of our day was one of the old School, free-livers, yet religiously hostile to the little band of Dissenters, who occupied a small meeting-house that nestled under the shade of some fine walnut trees, and standing back from the street. In this reviled conventicle, for the spirit of Church and King was the demon of the neighbourhood, or rather of the time, there assembled a friendly and intelligent congregation. The meeting-house was generally well-filled, and for my own pleasure, I shall record the names. First, Mr. and Mrs. Perry Branwhite, with their daughter Sally, and sons. . . . Mr. B. a quaint, upright, stiff, but somewhat of a poetic schoolmaster . . . next, Mr. Stribbling, the blacksmith, and family—plain, respectable people, though to my youthful eyes very ugly . . . certainly stone-deaf, yet regular in his attendance, troubling his minister by complaining of him as 'a Legal preacher,' on the ground that he selected Arminian texts. These at every service were looked out for him by his children, and upon them alone he formed his suspicions of Mr. Hickman's orthodoxy. . . . Beyond our seat, was the seat of Mr. Meeking, the baker, a good-natured, fresh-coloured, somewhat rotund old man, blue eyes, a light flaxen wig curled all round in double rows, and a beard duly shaven once a week. . . . Then there was Mrs. Snelling, the old pew-opener. We shall come now to the Table-pew. William Meeking has a bassoon to his lips, and some

dozens of country beaux, each with a leaf from the walnut trees in his button-hole, with perhaps a pink, a stock, or a sprig of sweet briar, are raising the Psalm. In yonder square pew, entered only from the vestry, sits Mrs. Hickman, the wife of the minister. . . . Then there is Mr. Watkinson, one of the master wool-combers of the town, wealthy for such a locality. . . . Mr. Buck, a stiff, old-fashioned linen draper, is waiting for notice in the adjoining pew. Mrs. Sherrar and her two maiden daughters occupy one of the upper seats in the synagogue, and her son-in-law, Mr. Hillier, the Squire's pew, carefully screened at both ends from the vulgar gaze. These ranked among the small gentry of the neighbourhood, the Sherrars keeping what was no mean establishment to the little country place . . . the Hilliers living in a handsome house with grounds, at the lower end of the town. . . . The poor sat in the galleries, the men occupying one, and the women the other; the girls and boys of the small Sunday School were in one of the other galleries."[1]

Two valuable lists of statistics for the historian of eighteenth-century Nonconformity are those drawn up by Dr. John Evans, the minister of Hand Alley Meeting-house, London, and by the Rev. Josiah Thompson, a Baptist minister. The latter list was drawn up about the time of the Petition to Parliament in 1772, and has been recently printed in detail.[2] It contains some interesting particulars about the meeting-houses of that period, but although reliable, is imperfect.

The list by Dr. John Evans is a much more valuable one, and is the only census we have of early eighteenth-

[1] Autobiography and other Memorials of Mrs. Gilbert, pp. 20-30, pub. 1874.

[2] "Transactions" of the Congregational Historical Society, Vol. V, IV. p. 205

century Nonconformity. It was drawn up probably at the desire of Viscount Barrington and his political friends, with the object of ascertaining the material strength of the Protestant Dissenters. The facts and figures in Evans' list are imperfect in many cases, but they were gathered together at that time with much care and labour, and they furnish useful information about the Dissenters of that age.

Evans does not provide figures for the Presbyterians of Norfolk, Middlesex, Devonshire, and several other counties where we know that Nonconformity was strong; or figures for the Independents of Bucks, Cheshire, Somerset, etc. . . . Taking the figures which he has provided, we find an approximate total of 126,884 Presbyterians and 42,935 Independents, or a total of nearly 170,000. We may fairly assume that in the year 1717, when this list was drawn up, there must have been no fewer than 200,000 avowed Dissenters in England, and this, out of a population of about six millions is a striking proof of the influence of Nonconformity at that time. This estimate does not include the Baptists or the Quakers, both denominations being strong in certain counties.

Evans divided the adherents of the meeting-houses into groups, such as "Esquires," "County Voters," "Borough Voters," "Yeomen," "Tradesmen," "Labourers," etc. The facts preserved show that there was a very large number of important people connected with the meeting-houses, and this was the case both in towns and country districts, in which latter places Nonconformity derived much support from the middle classes. The size of some of the congregations is rather surprising. Among the Independents, Cambridge, Gosport, and Bedford each had a congregation of 1000 and upwards, and there were many nearly as large. Among the

Presbyterians, the congregation numbered 1000 and upwards at Chester, Frome, Bolton (Lancs.), Chowbent (Lancs.), Warrington, and Dean Row (Cheshire). At Bristol the congregation was 1600; at Taunton 2000, at Bloxham and Milton (Oxfordshire) 1726, and at Cross Street, Manchester, 1515.

References are occasionally made by Evans to the wealth of the members. In his own congregation, there were eight members worth £10,000 each. At Whitehaven, there was one merchant worth over £20,000, and four worth each about £4000. In Whitehaven, the Dissenters by trade had such influence in the elections at Cockermouth, that with the Dissenters of Cockermouth they returned whom they pleased. These and many other interesting facts in this and similar records indicate the prestige and power of the founders of modern Nonconformity.

Membership in the meeting-houses meant more to the Independents than to the Presbyterians, although in the former the significance varied. In the first quarter of the century, the Rev. Robert Bragge, a London Independent minister, attempted to exercise Discipline by suspending a member on doctrinal grounds. At a later date (1737), Mr. Joseph Rawson was excommunicated from Castlegate meeting, Nottingham, and Dr. John Taylor, the well-known Arian minister, vigorously took up the matter. The Presbyterians were indifferent on the subject of membership, and rarely, if ever, exercised Discipline. In the English Presbyterian meeting-houses, it does not appear to have been the practice to have a Communion Roll, and although it may be found occasionally in congregations, the practice was of a comparatively late date, and was the result of the influence of Scottish Presbyterianism.

One of the explanations which accounts for the failure

of eighteenth-century Nonconformity, is the fact that all parties utterly neglected the doctrine of the Church. Churchmanship was a thing unknown to the ministers, except as it concerned the knowledge necessary for stating their own position, and for refuting the arguments of their opponents. The custom of restricting membership to one particular meeting-house, discouraging any interchange of Christian courtesies between one local meeting-house and another, was general throughout the century. Even Doddridge seemed to have a difficulty about the matter, but his friend, John Barker, wrote an admirable letter to him at the beginning of the year 1749:—

"Mr. —— acquainted me with ——'s taking his place with you and your Church at the Lord's Table, without your knowledge. An action somewhat singular, and not quite, perhaps, orderly. But suppose he had come into your vestry, and not asked, but demanded a place at the Table of our common Lord, upon the foundation of our common Christianity, I fancy you would not have refused him. I think in like circumstances, I could not have dared to have done it, for that Table is not mine, or yours, or any man's, but Christ's."

This neglect of united action by the Dissenters, and their lack of interest in the Catholic ideals of Ministry, Worship, and Sacraments in connexion with the visible Church, was a sad contrast to their fine Churchmanship of the previous century. It can only be interpreted as an excessive application of the Protestant principle, whereby individual liberty and individual opinion were elevated above Tradition of every kind.

CHAPTER X.

THE ACADEMIES.

THE Act of Nonconformity had a damaging effect upon the English Universities, in an unanticipated way, by excluding much intellectual ability from these seats of learning. Looking over the stretch of time between the Restoration and the present day, we may surmise that the originators of the Act imagined results very different from those actually existing to-day. Their object was to crush the Presbyterian party, and to make it impossible for anything in the nature of Puritanism to exist in the Established Church. In this they succeeded, but they did not destroy Puritanism. The Puritans represented thorough, honourable, uncompromising elements in our national character, and although their theology has been discarded, and their foibles made the subject of many a jibe, the spirit of the Puritans continues through Nonconformity its disciplinary effect upon Society.

By the Act of Uniformity, Cambridge, once the home of Puritanism and theological study, closed its door to the Nonconformist. The Act had a similar effect at Oxford, and later, Jacobitism increased that University's dislike of the Dissenter. From the Nonconformist point of view the loss was not great, as the standard of learning at these Universities was very low, and moral temptations abounded. In efficiency, the Universities of Scotland were equal to those of England, another link between

Scotland and the English Dissenters being a similarity of doctrine, with an absence of tests for students and graduates which interfered with individual religious convictions.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Nonconformist academies were attacked from motives which were political and ecclesiastical, one of their opponents being Samuel Wesley, the father of the famous family. The Dissenters replied in admirable fashion, one pamphlet particularly vindicating the loyalty and learning of the Dissenters. Owen of Shrewsbury in his answer to Sacheverell, pointed out the foolishness of compelling people to send their children to Scotland or Holland for an education which would only produce stricter notions of Nonconformity. This was actually the effect of repressive legislation, and the academy system in England fostered the principles of Nonconformity in those who did not go to Scotland or abroad.

Nonconformity has always been associated with the middle class of England and with the "trading people," but the importance of this will only be realised by remembering that the rank of these two grades of society was higher in the eighteenth century than it is to-day. The middle class, especially at the beginning of the century, frequently were the relatives of the county families who had supported the Civil War; while those who have read De Foe's "Complete Tradesman" will recall the names of esteemed, and even of titled families engaged in the pursuits of Trade.

The explanation of the connexion of Nonconformity with trade is simple. The sons of the ejected vicars in many instances followed their fathers into the Nonconformist ministry, but the next generation passed into business, and this accession of intellect accounts for the wonderful commercial progress made in the eighteenth

century. The names of men educated in the academies may be found in many spheres. The two Wilkinsons—John, the great iron-master and the inventor of the first iron boat, and William, the inventor of the blast-furnace—were students of Warrington Academy. George Walker, who did original work on Conic Sections, was trained at Kendal Academy where much attention was given to Science. Priestley, a Daventry student, was the discoverer of oxygen. In these and numerous other departments and professions, the names of academy men appear. Oliver Goldsmith was an usher at an academy, and Daniel De Foe was a student. Among others who received part of their education at academies were Lord Chancellor King, Hort, Archbishop of Tuam, Bishop Butler, Archbishop Secker, Nicholas Saunderson, the blind Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, Daniel Burgess, Secretary to the Princess of Wales, the first Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Dunmore, who represented the British colony of Virginia at the time of the War, Malthus, the Political Economist, Clive, the father of Lord Clive, Lord Willoughby of Parham, Lord Mansel, Goodwin, afterwards Archbishop of Cashel, Lord Foley, Viscount Bolingbroke, and other distinguished men.

The object of the present chapter is to define the relationship of the Academies to Nonconformity. If we make a moderate estimate, it will be found that the number of heterodox ministers at the Presbyterian and Independent meeting-houses between 1720 and the end of the century was about a thousand. It is a remarkable fact that not half-a-dozen of these men were untrained. By tracing their pastorates and their academies, the distinguishing characteristic of the academy may be found.

Those which were most efficient in learning were most progressive in theology. The academies of Attercliffe,

Findern, Kibworth (later at Hinckley), Whitehaven, Kendal, Daventry, Warrington, Highgate, Hoxton, Taunton, Exeter, Bridgwater and Carmarthen, all contributed students of a heterodox type. The Academy of Doddridge at Market Harborough (afterwards at Northampton) occupied a middle position, being neither Arian nor Calvinistic, although Doddridge's own principles favoured the latter scheme. His students generally fulfilled a ministry that was practical and evangelical. In some cases they withstood the Arian movement, but in others they appeared in the transition stage of the meeting-house. Daventry Academy, under Caleb Ashworth, who himself was an old student of Doddridge, tried to continue the conservative tradition with complete liberty of opinion, but the attempt failed, and a number of the Lancashire pulpits became Arian through the introduction of Daventry students.

This slight sketch of the academies inadequately puts on record a valuable educational piece of work. These institutions were begun privately, the earlier tutors taking a few pupils to his home, and giving them personal advice as well as instruction. They were never in any sense "colleges," and nothing in the way of endowments existed, while the emolument, never liberal, was usually meagre. The scholarship of the tutors was of the highest quality, and although they differed greatly in theological opinion, there was agreement among them upon the subjects of a common love of liberty, an unflinching adherence to principle, with a resolution to find out the error in sacred learning and to separate it from the truth.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MINISTRY.

At the Revolution Settlement the ministry of the Protestant Dissenters obtained a recognition by the State, almost equal to that of the Established Church. Hopes were entertained by the older ministers that Comprehension would ultimately follow, and that a permanent separation would be avoided. Apparently the younger generation of Dissenters were not so hopeful, or they were unwilling to proceed along this line, for in the year 1694 a public Ordination Service took place, the first among the Nonconformists since the Act of Uniformity. Edmund Calamy, D.D. (1671-1732), who was one of seven Presbyterian probationers ordained, has left an interesting account of the ceremony, and of the difficulties which he encountered in arranging it. An important condition which he and his friends insisted upon was that they were to be ordained "ministers of the Catholic Church, without any confinement to particular flocks, or to any one denomination". Calamy, with Thomas Reynolds, another of the young men, first applied to Mr. John Howe, who "appeared much pleased with the motion, and greatly encouraged us". He saw no advantage in having the Ordination publicly, and upon a suggestion that he would take part in the Service, he referred to the "Heads of Agreement," entered into between the Presbyterian and Congregational ministers, and expressed a wish that the Rev. Matthew Mead of Stepney (a prominent

Congregationalist) could be prevailed on to be the preacher. Mr. Mead was approached on the subject, but declined, and Calamy was not surprised. This made Howe more unwilling to move in the matter, and he consulted Lord Sommers, the Lord Keeper, who said that he would not be "satisfied to have any concern in the matter, if there were any present besides the ordainers, and the ordained". Calamy and his friends were troubled at this decision, as evidently they wanted a fuller recognition of Presbyterian Nonconformity by the State, but they determined to proceed.

Calamy's next step was to consult Dr. Bates, who after complimentary references to Calamy's grandfather, nevertheless declined to take part, on the ground that "having forborne any concern in Ordinations hitherto, he was not for engaging in them now". Calamy narrates the interview which followed, and with what plainness of speech he indicated to Dr. Bates his duty, but although he secured a definite assurance from Bates regarding his belief in the sufficiency of ordination by Presbyters, and in the justifiableness or separation from the Established Church, he was eventually compelled to accept the private explanation of that which prevented Bates from taking part —"a hindrance peculiar to himself".

After much difficulty Calamy and his six friends succeeded in arranging a Public Ordination, which took place at Dr. Annesley's meeting-house, Bishopsgate Within, near Little Saint Helen's, on 22 June, 1694. The whole of that summer day was spent in the Act, the congregation apparently being present throughout that time. Certificates of character were read, individual Confessions of Faith were received, questions from the Directory of the Westminster Assembly were put, and the candidates were examined both in Philosophy and Divinity. In addition, a Thesis upon a theological

question was given to each, and debated in Latin, criticisms being made by the ordaining ministers.

This valuable account of the first public Nonconformist Ordination in England, after the Revolution, illustrates the dignified views which the Protestant Dissenters held regarding their Orders. The account does not state positively whether Calamy and the others were ordained as ministers without charges, but this is implied, and Calamy was afterwards Assistant to Matthew Sylvester. It showed the hopes of these young men regarding their belief in the future of Presbyterianism in England, but it also disclosed a denominational antipathy between the Presbyterians and the Independents. Mead's Congregationalist views were well known, and he became the first Chairman of the Congregational Fund Board in 1695; while the action of the two Presbyterians, Howe and Bates, probably arose from caution, in view of the political situation.

For the first quarter of the century at least, the strictest views of Ordination were held by the Dissenters. In an Ordination sermon by Calamy, delivered to five young men in 1716, and in another sermon the following year, he reminds the candidates that they have to do with people who will not be led blindfold . . . their inquisitiveness and their willingness to see with their own eyes . . . will put young ministers under the necessity of searching things to the bottom. In this latter sermon is a letter which Calamy had sent to a divine in Germany, giving an account of Protestant Dissent in England. He states that the Dissenters have a hundred places of worship in and about London, and the other cities and corporations, especially in the trading part of the kingdom, have proportionate numbers.

As the century advanced, the tendency on the part of the Congregationalists was to increase their oversight of

students. An examination of the Minutes of the Congregational Fund Board will make it clear that the rules regarding students were periodically revised until 1784. On the other hand, the tendency on the part of the Presbyterians was to dispense with Discipline, and to simplify admission into the ministry, as far as a doctrinal Confession of Faith was concerned. On the whole, there was little difference between the Presbyterians and Independents during the third quarter of the century, and quite a number of cases occur where ordination was never received, and where the meeting-house was ministered to by one who merely held the appointment.[1] There appears to have been a distinction between this and an entrance to the pastorate, but the occasional references are not clear.

In the year 1766, Samuel Newton of Norwich, an Independent minister, wrote a vigorous pamphlet on the causes of declension of Congregational Churches. Among other causes, he named the following :—

1. Influence of Methodism.
2. Noisy, empty popularity of some of our preachers.
3. A systematic-Aristotelian way of others.
4. Neglect of Discipline.
5. An absurd method of education that has prevailed in our Academies.
6. A neglected Bible; ignorance and Enthusiasm in our Assemblies.

The character of the Nonconformist ministry had begun to change about the year 1715, but it is particularly noticeable after the Salters' Hall controversy. The first Nonconformists of the Revolution period were frequently men of good family and social position. It is not an unusual thing to be able to trace their sons and

[1] Mr. Gordon writes that in these cases ordained pastors were called in for the administration of the Sacraments.

even their grandsons in the ministry, but beyond that, the levitical link is rarely found. The difficulty of obtaining students was partly owing to the poor salary, and partly to the new ways which Trade, Science, Medicine, and Literature were opening up. The change in the theological situation also turned away some from the ranks of the ministry. The glamour of Nonconformity had gone, and a dull, dissatisfied atmosphere brooded over the meeting-houses of England. By the middle of the eighteenth century, there were very few which had not in one way or another been affected by the Arian Movement.

After the first quarter of the century, it is not possible to describe Protestant Dissent as in any sense united, although in general and political matters the Three Denominations usually acted on behalf of the Dissenters of London and elsewhere. In other respects, the Dissenters were very much divided, and the party-spirit constantly appeared. The free and tolerant atmosphere of Dissent created an individuality in religious opinion that has never been exceeded in Nonconformity, and it would be no exaggeration to say that every Dissenting minister had his own theological position, which, as a matter of fact, generally came to be classified under one or other of the recognised designations. The important difference between an eighteenth-century minister and one of the present day is that while the modern Nonconformist associates himself naturally with a party, the eighteenth-century minister declined to take this ground. In actual practice, he could not help falling into cliques, and we find that by concerted action, and particularly by correspondence, the Dissenting ministers gradually resolved themselves into groups.

Each meeting-house was a law unto itself, and the characteristics which the meeting assumed were contingent

upon the personal attitude or influence of the minister, or upon the presence of one or more prominent laymen. Numerous details regarding the history of eighteenth-century Nonconformity are still obscure, and will only emerge as research is patiently continued. For example, it would be interesting to know whether the use of the word "Nonconformist" was frequent in the eighteenth century. According to the Act of Toleration the legal title of such was, "Protestants dissenting from the Church of England," hence the appellation, "Protestant Dissenters," or more briefly, "Dissenters". The title of "Nonconformist" was in use from the Act of Uniformity until the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the following passage illustrates two views of the word:—

"We for our part, who because in some things we conform not, are called 'Non-Conformists' (whereas no man conforms in everything), are not allowed to be counted members of this Church, by those that take Denominations not from the intimate essentials of things (as sameness of doctrine, and the institutions of Christian worship), but from the loose and very separable Accidents."

It may surprise many who prefer the word "Nonconformist" to know that this word was rarely adopted in the eighteenth century, and that the word "Dissenter," instead of being a depreciatory term, was the legal title of a party that were proud to be known by the designation. Another point of interest that remains to be elucidated is with reference to the title of "Reverend". It is clear that the original Nonconforming ministers received the title "Mr.," and this form of address was customary until the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is difficult to locate the exact time or place when the title originated, but the present

writer is of opinion that it was somewhere about the year 1730. After that year, the title became frequent, and latterly general, although a writer in the "Monthly Repository" considered that the retention of it by the Unitarian ministers was "inconsistent with that manly and independent spirit which ought to inspire every part of our System".[1]

The ministers of the meeting-houses in the eighteenth century were a remarkable body of men, and worthy of the ministry of any age. Here and there might be found a pitiful exception, like the one who said he had not forsaken the ministry, but that the ministry had forsaken him. On the whole, they were a dignified, cultured class of men, paying attention to the social conventionalities of life, and in many cases not averse to the worldly practice of wearing a wig! It is not often that we meet with a pen-portrait such as that drawn for us by Doddridge, in his inimitable way, when he described "honest John Reynolds as (probably) now scratching his head in the chimney corner at Atherstone, and afflicting himself with the chilling thought of washing his hands and changing his linen before next Sunday morning".

Dr. Taylor, the eminent Arian scholar, sent a letter in 1724, from his first pastorate at Kirkstead, which contained the following reference :—

"My hands are, indeed, at present pretty full of business; for, besides my ordinary ministerial employment, I take boys to table and teach. If you know of any, Mr. Johnson, who would have their children instructed in the languages, writing, arithmetic, in a good wholesome air, in a country retirement, out of the way of the common temptations of the age, where they should

[1] Mr. Gordon points out that in the address of Letters "Rev. Mr." is invariable in the case of ordained men, and was never otherwise in the eighteenth century, except among the Baptists, who objected to the title.

in every respect be carefully looked after, and well done to, if you should recommend them to me, I hope, through the blessing of God upon my endeavours, you would never be ashamed of it. We are situated pleasantly, at some distance from a little country village, out of the sight or hearing of anything that's vicious, whereby youth may be corrupted, near the navigable river which runs between Boston and Lincoln. My wife is particularly well qualified for ordering and encouraging children."

The position of a Dissenting minister in the second half of the century was not a profitable one, and it often lacked both material comfort and dignity. The circumstances were advantageous in the older and richer meeting-houses of the metropolis, or in such as the prosperous one at Walthamstow. In towns where trade and commerce were increasing, the meeting-house was influential, as at Liverpool, Bristol, Norwich, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and the New Meeting, Birmingham. The county of Lancashire which had strong Puritan traditions, was prominent in the number of its meeting-houses. The Devon and Cornwall meeting-houses though fairly numerous, became poor as the century advanced.

Two of the pathetic features of the Dissenting ministry is the change to secular occupation which was made by quite a number, and the departure to the Established Church by others. The latter event happened chiefly at the beginning of the reign of George II, and is explained partly by the fact that the dissolution of Dissent seemed imminent, and partly from the readiness of the Established Church to accept a latitudinarian subscription to its formularies.

The eighteenth century was not an age of great preachers, and in rare cases did the Dissenters excel their brethren of the Established Church in popularity. There was, however, nothing perfunctory about the way in which

the Dissenting minister discharged his duties, and the failure to reach the people arose from the taste of the age. The religious atmosphere of a meeting-house was intellectual and critical, and the type of sermon had to be analytic and apologetic. The congregations of historic Dissent had no place for Emotion in their worship, and one explanation of this is simple. The excesses of the Quakers of the seventeenth century had been strenuously resisted by the Puritan party, and so great was the dislike of anything fanatical that throughout the eighteenth century "Enthusiasm" was avoided both by Conformist and Nonconformist. This was the main reason why the Dissenters objected to Methodism, and nothing more disparaging could be said of an opponent than to call him a "brain-sick enthusiast". This traditional tendency in the meeting-houses generated phlegmatic preachers, and although men like Foster, Orton, Farmer, and Doddridge were acceptable in the pulpit, the appeal of Religion in the eighteenth century was directed to Reason alone. Wherever the emotions were successfully blended with the intellect, the compliment which the age paid the preacher was to describe him as "rational and pathetic".

Whatever the Dissenting minister lacked in pulpit power, he supplied in mental ability. His activity in this direction usually took the form of a controversy, literary or theological. It was the age of the pamphlet and the periodical, and some of the best work done in the eighteenth century was through the medium of the Press. The "Occasional Papers" were an important literary preparation for the stormy after-days which followed the Salters' Hall Synod. Such periodicals as "The Old Whig," "The Independent Whig," and "The Monthly Review," contained material of admirable quality. The literary work of Doddridge, particularly

his "Family Expositor," had a very wide influence. The pamphlets of James Towers, Furneaux's "Letters" to Justice Blackstone, the valuable work of Dr. Andrew Kippis (especially in the "Biographia Britannica"), together with a host of other writers on theological, ecclesiastical, and political subjects, vindicate the Protestant Dissenting ministers from any suggestion of intellectual inertia.

It is not possible to dwell upon all the personal characteristics, which here and there have been preserved concerning these men. Sometimes the sentiments of their lives are of the noblest, and their literary expression elevated. At other times, the pensive and human aspects of the age flit through a pamphlet or a sermon, which is the only reminder that they once lived and spoke in England. The story of Dissent in the eighteenth century is not one over which we can ever grow enthusiastic, for it contains some of the deepest sorrows of Nonconformity; but nothing can obliterate the impression that in a century of infidelity and careless morals, the Dissenting minister was a believer in Revealed Religion, a lover of liberty, and a friend to all who were able to appreciate the principles which he represented.

CHAPTER XII.

LITURGIOLOGY.

THE subject of Liturgy among the Dissenters was never generally discussed. Extempore prayers were frequent, not only in the meeting-houses, but in the Established Church at the beginning of the century, and during the Evangelical revival. Archbishop Secker was one of the first in the Church of England to perceive the value of an improved Order of Service in the parish churches, and his "Charges" contained useful remarks on the subject.

The difficulty of extempore prayers was recognised early in the century, and Matthew Henry, a fine example of the old school of preachers, prepared a book which contained many helpful suggestions for prayer, the petitions being grounded upon numerous passages of Scripture.

It is not clear whether there was ever more than one Sunday service in the ordinary meeting-house of England, and where there was a second, it was often called a "Lecture". There was nothing like the regularity of service as in modern Nonconformity, and the same may be said for the Established Church.[1] The meeting-house was a building that was not used every Sunday, and was not always put to a sacred use. At the service for Worship,

[1] "The traditions of Nonconformity was to devote Sunday evening to 'repetitions' in private houses; meeting-houses were unlighted" (Gordon).

there were at least two prayers, and the "Long Prayer" as it was called, was no doubt worthy of its name! The old phrases lingered in sermons and prayers long after they had lost their seventeenth-century meaning. The historic Nonconformist stock, "the Protestant Dissenters," had a decided aversion to the rhapsodical utterances which were the outcome of the orthodox revival.

In the year 1730, a spirited discussion arose upon the "Dissenting Interest". It originated through a pamphlet by Strickland Gough, who had been a student at Taunton Academy, but who afterwards conformed, and obtained a small living near Tilbury Fort. Gough's criticisms though severe, were not altogether unjustified, for not only was the ministry at a stage much inferior to anything preceding it, but with the abandonment of the old theological position, the meeting-houses were neglected. Gough's view was that the Salters' Hall controversy had injured the Dissenters more than all their enemies together, chiefly from the fact that both the Subscribers and the Nonsubscribers did not actually express their personal convictions, but in the action which they took were obliged to consult "the humours of their people". Had the moderate position been held, the Salters' Hall conference would have served a useful purpose, but when feeling arose, bigotry, "the ruin of every cause," was engendered. Proceeding to discuss the position of the Dissenting minister, Gough blamed the congregations who assumed the characters of judges and censors of sermons, instead of adopting the modest and humble disposition of learners. He reminded the Dissenters that as the taste of mankind differs, so the method of applying religious truth must differ, "and what was fashionable to our forefathers is now as disagreeable to us as their dress". He gives some excellent advice to ministers. He had observed, he remarked,

two faults in public worship; the one was that their prayers were too short, and the other that their sermons were too long. The one had too little reverence towards God, and the other was too tedious to ourselves. "By 'longer prayers,' I only mean longer in proportion to the sermon. I think to worship God for twenty minutes, and to dictate to men for sixty, is not so equal as one could wish." It will be noticed from this that the meeting-house Service had been considerably reduced in time, and that although the prayers had been shortened, the sermon still occupied the foremost place in the service.

Gough suggested the preparation of prayers, which he thought ought to be studied previously, as much as the sermon. He criticised "the mediocrity which was creeping into the ranks of the Dissenting ministry," and he hoped that the Dissenting conscience and policy would not "spoil a mechanic who might earn his bread and maintain his family, by taking him to misguide the people (for they are too often ignorant and vain), bring a family into the world to live meanly, and at last be left in distress".

Several vigorous replies were given to Gough, among them being one by Philip Doddridge, which was virtually his first publication. A perusal of the pamphlet confirms the high opinion passed upon it by contemporary writers. It is full of common sense, and the words of caution and advice given in it illustrate the change which was passing over Nonconformity. The ideas in it prove that Doddridge saw what was needful for Nonconformity and endeavoured to supply it while at the same time he recognised what was vital and endeavoured to preserve it.

Doddridge's main contention is against the suggestion of Gough, that the views of the people should be ignored.

He thinks that it should be the concern of ministers to study the character and temper of their people as far as they can do it with conscience and honour. While not "so absurd and perverse as to assert that learning and politeness will be the ruin of our cause," he thinks that "a cause may be ruined by learned and polite men, if with their other furniture they have not religion and prudence too". He cannot imagine anything more imprudent in the present circumstances than to neglect the populace ("plain people") "who constitute nine parts in ten of most of our congregations. . . . When we have lost interest in them, I fain would know what would become of us or them."

Doddridge makes an interesting remark about preaching. He recommends that ministers should speak plainly to congregations, if they should desire them to understand and approve what they say. He lays stress upon what he calls the "particular turn of thought" among Dissenters, and adds, "I cannot but believe that if the Established clergy and the Dissenting ministers in general were to exchange their strain of preaching and their manner of living but for one year, it would be the ruin of our cause, even though there should be no alteration in the constitution and discipline of the Church of England".

Another writer, in reply to Gough, draws attention to the fact that nearly fifty Dissenting ministers had conformed within a short time, but points out that most of them were young persons, "who have made no attempt to settle among us, or who have not had an opportunity of suitable places". The explanation of this secession from the ranks of the Dissenting ministry is that the lot of the Dissenting minister had become hard and wretchedly poor, and Conformity on the basis of a latitudinarian Subscription offered greater attraction to

those who had lost interest in the Nonconformist tradition.

It is evident that Doddridge was not satisfied with the way in which the meeting-houses had conducted their services, and he attempted to improve matters in his little meeting-house at Kibworth. About three years before Gough wrote his pamphlet, two members from a neighbouring congregation entered the Kibworth meeting-house with the object of hearing Doddridge, and of finding out his suitability for the position of minister of the congregation which they represented. They were greatly annoyed at what they saw and heard, and the Order of Service suggests that Doddridge looked upon his meeting-house as a Chapel-of-ease. Shortly afterwards, John Barker, his friend, writing in a humorous strain, told Doddridge that his two visitors had been perturbed at the "Legal" character of Doddridge's preaching, at the fact that the Ten Commandments were painted on the wall, at the clerk who uttered an audible "Amen," and at the concluding of the service with the Lord's Prayer. Barker closes his account with the words: "Do you know what mischief you have done? What a blot you have brought upon yourself by such offensive practices?"

Two elements began to affect the public worship of the Protestant Dissenters. One was the growing Arianism of the age, with a consequent unbelief in the worship of Christ, and in prayer. The Service became a "Lord's Day Lecture," and those who did assemble in the meeting-houses came together with the special object of hearing a discourse upon the subject of Revealed Religion. There were exceptions to this, and the tribute paid to Dr. James Foster, a London Baptist minister, by a young gentleman who heard him preach, is one of the most striking instances of the power of a

rational and reverent service in an eighteenth-century meeting-house. This young man had been brought up to despise Dissenters, but going one day to hear Foster he was deeply impressed with the sincerity of the preacher and the reality of the whole service.

The other element in Dissent was the attempt to retain the old Order of Service, but to expand its purpose. The solemnity and dread of meeting-house worship at the close of the seventeenth century had disappeared by the middle of the eighteenth, and the sociable aspect of worship began to be cultivated. In the Parish Churches the Psalms of Tate and Brady were sung, but the people were still attached to the older ones of Sternhold and Hopkins. In the meeting-houses, the hymns of Watts gradually displaced his version of the Psalms, but prejudice against either psalms or hymns was found in certain meeting-houses. The leading Dissenting ministers recognising the importance of improving public worship, made several attempts to alter matters. The administration of the two Sacraments in the Arian meeting-houses was a difficulty (on account of the formula of Baptism) with that of the Lord's Supper. Several attempts were made to give a new interpretation to the latter Sacrament in such sermons as that by William Willets of Newcastle-on-Tyne, who made it a memorial act, but the people became indifferent about the Sacraments, and the general administration of these ordinances was unknown. The new orthodox party—especially in East Anglia—endeavoured to restore Discipline, and to renew the Covenant of membership. When Samuel Clarke of Birmingham settled there in 1757, Job Orton wrote him about the subject of Baptism. He told Clarke that while he might never be fully satisfied upon the point, yet he hoped he would think the arguments in favour so preponderating as to justify the administration to infants.

He praised Joseph Hallett's piece, "excepting what he says of the effects of Baptism". In offering to send Clarke the pamphlets relating to the controversy between Fleming and Burroughs upon the subject, he adds: "There are some good things in Fleming, but as you know, he is no great critic, nor much acquainted with antiquity". On the subject of the Lord's Supper, Orton wrote at a later date, thanking Palmer for his answer to Priestley, and said that he never so much saw the wisdom and goodness of our blessed Lord in instituting such an ordinance, as since the notions of the Socinians had so much prevailed.

The most depressing twenty years in English Christianity in the eighteenth century were those between 1730 and 1750. The facts which may be gathered from this period prove that the latitudinarian method adopted in the Church of England with respect to its formularies, and the prevalence of Arianism among the Dissenters, were factors subversive to individual religion and worship. The fear which the 1745 Rebellion aroused in some quarters stimulated the Protestant spirit which was departing from English religious life, and many Dissenting ministers took occasion to preach and print sermons asserting their loyalty to the House of Hanover. This momentary enthusiasm for the principles of the Revolution soon passed, and it was evident that in church and meeting-house a decay of religion had begun. One writer, a layman, in dealing with the problem, made the following remark:—

"A great deal of degeneracy and of the desolate appearance of the House of God is owing to the criminal neglect of such ministers who content themselves with passing sentence against the age, and hating instruction and refusing to be reclaimed; and with offering up a few languid and customary prayers . . . instead of exerting

their natural abilities, sunk in ease and indolence, that they may become masters of all the powers of strong and forcible reasoning."

These words, addressed to Dissenting ministers, not only show that the traditional Order of Service had become ineffective, but that the age, influenced by such movements as Deism and Arianism, required a type of preaching to meet the changed conditions.

The movement for a reformation of the Liturgy of the Established Church, initiated by John Jones and his friends, was entirely confined to a group of men within that Church, but from references in his MSS. it is clear that he expected support from the Dissenters, and anticipated that it might lead to union between the two parties. Whether it was in opposition to this movement or whether only a coincidence we cannot say, but in the autumn of 1760, a circular relating to a Liturgy was issued by certain persons sympathetic with the views taught at Warrington Academy; and in 1762, a rough draft was published.

Dr. John Taylor who represented a conservative element at that Academy saw it and wrote an earnest defence of extempore prayer, but the discussion was not continued, as he died several weeks after he had finished the Preface.

The new Liturgy was introduced into the Octagon Chapel, Liverpool, which place of worship was an experiment in advanced Nonconformity, from the years 1763-76. It had been prepared with the object of fixing opinions of an advanced type. Job Orton, who belonged to the moderate party of the Protestant Dissenters, was very much disappointed with the production:—

"My chief objection against this Liturgy is that it is scarcely a Christian Liturgy, much less so than the new

Common Prayer Book. In the Thanksgivings, mention is made of Christ as a preacher and an example—nothing more. In the Collects, His name is hardly introduced. A few conclude, 'through Jesus Christ,' but most omit that. His Resurrection is only once mentioned and His intercession not directly. Not a single text that speaks of His dying for sin, or acting as a Prophet, Priest, or King. The Spirit is quite banished from this Liturgy. I question whether His name once occurs, or whether a person who was to be a judge of Christianity only by this Liturgy would know that there was a Holy Ghost. His descent upon the Apostles, and the consequent spread of the Gospel, is never mentioned. The people are taught by the minister's address to expect forgiveness upon confession, repentance, amendment, forgiveness of others, and confidence in the Divine mercy; but not a word of Christ, or of Faith in Him, or Love to Him, nor, as I remember, any one act of the mind, of which Christ is the object, nor any motives or considerations taken from the Gospel. Grieved I am, and very much so, to see such an almost Deistical composition."

The only other instance of a Liturgy among the Dissenters was the one adopted by Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808), who seceded from the Church of England and in April, 1774, opened a meeting-house in Essex Street, Strand,—the first Unitarian Chapel in England. The Liturgy was based upon a private MS. revision of the Prayer Book by Samuel Clarke, the volume having been given by Clarke's son to the British Museum. The alterations were so radical, the sentiments being entirely Unitarian, that the book never met with acceptance from other Protestant Dissenters. During the last of the century, the subjects of Church attendance and public worship did not give the Dissenters much concern. They appear to have worked at the problem from the other end, and

instead of trying to make people church-going, they tried to make them religious. As the century closed and the nineteenth century opened there were signs of awakening on the subject of individual religion, but it was not until many years afterwards that church-going became almost universal. The condition of London Nonconformity in the year 1810 was typical of the state of things throughout the country, although in some parts owing to local circumstances things might occasionally be better or worse. In London in that year the majority of the 240 meeting-houses had Morning services, and the majority had Afternoon services in addition. The Evening service was beginning to appear among the Independents and the English Presbyterians; but only one of the five Scotch Presbyterian congregations (Church of Scotland) had an Evening service, the other four having services in the morning and afternoon. Two out of the three congregations connected with the Scottish Seceders had an Evening service.[1]

The Particular Baptists also had Morning and Afternoon Service, a good proportion also being in the evening. Among the General Baptists (four congregations) there was no Evening Service, but two had a meeting in the afternoon. Judging from the long list of Wesleyan meetings held in the evening, it appears as if that denomination popularised the Evening Service, but it is interesting to note that they had no stated supply for their meetings. The last fact that need be mentioned is that only two out of the nine Unitarian meeting-houses had an Evening Service, and it is evident from this as from other data, that the advanced theological opinions of the eighteenth century had injured rather than increased Church attendance.

[1] *Vide* an article in C. H. S. Trans., Vol. VI, II. p. 126, on London Nonconformity in 1810.

CHAPTER XIII.

HYMNOLOGY.

If the Dissenters of the eighteenth century were not able to make a contribution to Liturgiology, they effected, by means of the introduction of hymns, a change in public worship which has been universally accepted. The Psalms of Isaac Watts were pleasing to many, but the use of them in the meeting-houses was slow, and this was particularly the case with his hymns. The Church of England had its needs supplied by Sternhold and Hopkins, with Tate and Brady. In the year 1731, a writer discussing the suggestion of a free choice to every Clerk, declared that he himself would accept Watts' hymns, but if the "people" were to choose, they could go back to the "old". The Baptists were slow to appreciate music in the meeting-houses, and a further illustration of the conservative tendency of English religion is in the fact that Watts' Psalms, published in 1719, were retained in the London meeting-houses as late as 1795, but his hymns were ignored. In that year, Kippis and several others prepared a hymn-book in which he acknowledged that their principal obligations were still due to Dr. Watts, and he made a neat adaptation of a text by describing Watts' "praise" as in all the churches.

Watts' first contribution to Hymnology was in the year 1706, and he continued to publish until 1719. He was greatly interested in the verses which Addison occasionally contributed to the "Spectator," and he wrote

to Addison appreciatively, a week after that writer had published "When all Thy mercies O my God!" Another poem by Addison appeared at the conclusion of an "Essay against Atheism and Infidelity," and was composed as an answer to Deism, which was already appearing on the horizon.[1] It was through Watts that these odes found their way into the meeting-houses of England, and remain until this day most precious items of hymnology.

The event that caused Watts' hymns to come into general use in the eighteenth century was the return of orthodox religion, and on this wave they flowed into the nineteenth. Zinzendorf wrote three times as many hymns as Watts, but the modern mind cannot appreciate the poetry or the sentiment of the former.

Apart from the general work of Watts as an hymnologist, he will always be remembered throughout the Christian world for two of his hymns—"Our God our help in ages past," and "Jesus shall reign". This latter hymn was set to a tune by Ralph Harrison, an Arian minister, who gave it the name "Warrington" after the Academy in which he had been trained, and the tune is as immortal as the hymn.

Another Nonconformist hymn-writer, Philip Doddridge, was almost as successful as Watts.[2] In the beginning of 1755, Orton published a collection of Doddridge's hymns, and in less than forty years they had reached a seventh edition. Kippis thought that Doddridge had not as good an ear as Watts. His numbers were not as equally flowing and harmonious, but—he added—Doddridge had not indulged in extravagant praise as Watts had done, particularly in the first book of hymns, and it was a matter of

[1] "The spacious firmament on high."

[2] Mr. Gordon contributes the interesting fact that Doddridge wrote hymns to the text or topic of his sermons, and gave them out, couplet by couplet, to be sung after Sermon.

pleasure to him to observe that Doddridge had not taken a single subject from the Canticles. This distinction marks a stage in English hymnology, and is significant of the way in which the leaders of Christian thought were striving to give expression to all religious ideas in a rational and temperate way. Job Orton, the biographer of Watts, made a remark to a friend that he did not like the "luscious divinity" of Watts, and it is evident that much attention was directed against this tendency by those who adapted the hymns of Watts during the eighteenth century.

Various attempts were made in the last quarter of the century to provide for the new needs of worship. Two examples were the Bristol Hymn-book, published in 1777, and a book in 1790, by the Rev. Dr. Enfield of Warrington, who offered his hymns not as a substitute to those of Watts, but as an appendix to them. The greater number of the hymns were gathered from Watts, Doddridge, and Addison, and a feature of Enfield's book was the poems of Mrs. Barbauld, who at the time was unmarried, and living at her home in Warrington.

In 1786, Newcome Cappe, the Unitarian minister of York, published a volume entitled, "A Selection of Psalms for Social Worship". In it were some contemporary writers such as Brekell, Fawcett, Toplady, etc., but he drew also from Watts, Doddridge, and Wesley. The title of the book was significant, and indicated a departure from the awesome hymns of which Watts was a master, and another characteristic was the introduction of hymns containing social sentiment. Cappe had some very good principles of selection, and this one is interesting:—"Psalmody is not necessarily confined to the expression of devout sentiments only, e.g. Col. III. 16, where we may employ it for the edification and admonition of ourselves and one another . . . such Psalms formed . . . from religious considerations, sung as under the eye of

God, and in contemplation of His presence, constitute a very proper part of Social Worship".

Other illustrations could be given of the way in which the Arian party among the Dissenters were interested in the subject of hymnology, and desired to retain this new vehicle of devotion by making it more rational, objective, and sincere. In the preface to a "Collection of Psalms" by George Walker, a well-known Dissenting minister, he stated he had reason to believe that Watts had meditated the correction of himself, both as a divine and as a poet. Walker proceeded to adapt the hymns of Watts, remarking that whatever poetic spirit Watts may have had, yet his best compositions are blemished by low and grovelling lines.

Numerous instances could be given of the variety of doctrinal opinion expressed by the change of a word, sometimes by the improvement of the metaphor, the sentiment, or metre. The following illustrates a point of view, rather than a change of doctrine. When Doddridge composed this hymn, apparently he had in imagination a picture of the Israelites in the desert :—

> Lord of the Sabbath, hear our vows,
> On this thy day, in this thy house.
> And own with grateful sacrifice,
> The songs which from the desert rise.

In Enfield's Hymn-Book, the words "the desert," were altered to "Thy temple," which, however, changed the period of Israelitish history considerably. Two years afterwards, Lindsey accepted the latter emendation in his Unitarian hymn-book, but altered the first line thus: "God of the Sabbath, hear our vows". Enfield repeated his own alteration in a new edition of his hymn-book in 1795, but in the same year, and shortly before Enfield's work, Dr. Andrew Kippis published a book. In it the line was made to read : "The songs

which from the churches rise". It is interesting to follow the history of this line in the nineteenth century. At the close of that century, the Church of England preferred the words "the temple" (although a Unitarian first suggested it!), and the Nonconformist had returned to Doddridge's original phrase, "the desert".

The following is an illustration of the doctrinal changes that were attempted in these lines of Watts:—

My dear Redeemer and my Lord
I read my duty in Thy Word;
But in Thy life the law appears
Drawn out in living characters.

This view of Scripture did not suit the Arians, and Kippis transposed the verse in this way:—

I read my duty in the *word*
Of my Redeemer and my Lord.

A variation of this view was given by Rev. George Walker, another Arian minister:—

My dear Redeemer and my Lord
Fair lies my duty in Thy *word*.

Cappe, the Unitarian minister of York, advanced a step further in these lines:—

I read my duty in the *word*
Of my *redeemer* and my Lord;
But in his life and temper shines
Thy law, my God, in fairest lines.

When Lindsey published his book in 1774, he introduced the Nature note into hymnology, as he had done it into his Liturgy. He accepted the hymns of Addison, and some of those by Doddridge and Watts. A new feature was introduced in the hymn on the right of private judgment:—

Imposture shrinks from light,
And dreads a curious eye:
Thy doctrines, Lord, the test invite,
They bid us search and try.

Lord, to thy *word* we bring
A meek, inquiring mind ;
And, joyful, at Salvation's spring
Refreshing truth we find.

With understanding blest,
Created to be free,
Our faith on man we dare not rest,
Subject to none but Thee.

O Lord, our spirit lead,
With soundest knowledge fill ;
From noxious error guard our creed,
From prejudice our will.

The truth once learn'd impress
With favour on our hearts ;
And help us firmly to profess
'Gainst all seducing arts.[1]

In the year 1760, Michael Pope the Arian minister of Leather Lane, London, published an enlargement of the Bristol Hymn-Book, and introduced hymns upon several new subjects, especially those referring to the settlement and the death of a minister, with several containing "national" references, and alluding to the wars with the French.

The Thanksgiving hymn for 29th November, 1759, reflects a different condition of things, from the point of view of a Dissenter, than that which had existed in England a century before :—

Say, should we search the globe around,
Where can such happiness be found,
As dwells in Britain's favour'd isle ?
Here plenty reigns ; here freedom sheds
Her choicest blessings on our heads,
And bids our bleakest mountains smile.

[1] Mr. Gordon states that it was written by Thos. Scott.

Here Commerce spreads the wealthy store,
Which comes from ev'ry foreign shore ;
Science and Art their charms display ;
Religion gives us here to raise
Our voices in our Maker's praise
As Truth and conscience point the way.
. . . . . .
Long as the moon her course shall run,
Or men behold the circling sun,
Oh still may God in Britain reign ;
Still crown her Armies with success,
With peace and joy her borders bless,
And all her sacred Rights maintain.[1]

The hymns of Charles Wesley and of the Moravians form Collections by themselves. It was Methodism that popularised music in public worship, but many a ludicrous incident occurred before hymn-singing became the harmonious and reverent medium of religious expression which it is to-day. In an edition of Methodist hymns published in 1779, the greater part of which had been composed by Charles Wesley, the following [modest !] estimate of the work appears :—

"In these hymns there is no doggerel, no botches ; nothing put in to patch up the rhyme ; no feeble expletives. Here is nothing turgid or bombast on the one hand, or low and creeping on the other. Here are no cant expressions ; no words without meaning. Those who impute this to us, know not what they say. We talk common-sense both in prose and verse, and use no word but in a fixed and determinate sense."

The editor—John Wesley—adds, regarding the poetry of the hymns, that by labour a man might become a tolerable imitator of Spenser, Shakespeare, or Milton, and might heap together pretty, compound epithets as "pale-eyed," "meek-eyed," and the like, but unless he

[1] Written by Andrew Kippis, D.D. (Gordon).

be born a poet he will never attain the genuine spirit of poetry. Wesley affirms that he can recommend the book, as a small part of the hymns is of his own composing. Many of the hymns of the brothers Wesley are disagreeable to modern taste, and it would be easy to criticise them by our present standard. One of their valuable aspects was the subjectivity of their note. They were songs of certainty and of personal experience, that fact alone entitling them to the success which they achieved :—

How can a sinner know
  His sins on earth forgiven?
How can my gracious Saviour show
  My name inscribed in Heaven?
. . . . . .
What we have felt and seen
  With confidence we tell;
And publish to the sons of men
  The signs infallible.

The following verse is not so pleasing, but it is a typical sentiment :—

O unexhausted Grace!
O love unspeakable!
I am not gone to my own place;
I am not yet in Hell!
Earth doth not open yet,
My soul to swallow up,
And hanging o'er the burning pit
I am still forced to hope.

About two years after Count Zinzendorf visited the Countess of Huntingdon, a Collection of Moravian Hymns was published in London. It included hymns by Watts, Stennet, Wesley, Cennick, and other English writers, but the greater number of the hymns were from Moravian sources, and had references to the Cross, the Lamb, and the Blood. The following is a favourable specimen :—

Dear Jesus, be near,
And make Thyself clear
To each of our hearts :
That we may know nothing, but
Thee and Thy Smarts.

We are thy poor sheep ;
To Thy Wounds will keep,
In them is our food,
Indeed there our strength lies, and
Our only good.

We are Thy poor clay,
Form us from this day
For Thy use alone ;
And let us rejoicing
Feel we are Thy Own.

It will be seen from this verse that while the eighteenth-century religion had broad elements in it, there was also a notable recrudescence of theological language (and in some cases of doctrine) which belonged to the previous century. It was largely through Whitefield, Wesley, and the Countess of Huntingdon, as well as through the orthodox revivals for which these representative movements were chiefly responsible, that an inrush of antiquated words took place.

On the whole, the contribution of eighteenth-century Hymnology to the religious life of England was of a permanent character. It was not a *believing* century, but by means of sacred song, men found themselves lifted into a realm where Emotion once again had its rightful place in Divine worship. It is granted that sometimes the hymns were unreal and untrue, but the real and the true are indestructible from age to age, and nineteenth-century religion began in England with a new and powerful ally in sanctuary music. The obsolete hymns were laid aside, and the unsuitable ones forgotten, and many modern hymn writers owe inspiration and, in some cases, words, ideas, and metre to these eighteenth-century sources.

CHAPTER XIV.

POLITY.

THE question of polity among the Nonconformists would never have been raised after the Act of Uniformity had not theological differences appeared among them. When the temporary Indulgence was granted in 1672, licences were taken out, most of them bearing denominational designations; but from one cause and another, they can only be described as approximately correct. It was significant of Richard Baxter's desire for Comprehension within the Established Church, that when he did take out a licence, he declined the terms "Independent" and "Presbyterian"; and the word "Nonconformist" was inserted.[1]

At the Revolution, the Protestant Dissenters were on friendlier terms with each other than ever they had been before, but were still apart, from circumstances which were both social and theological. The Congregationalists were suspicious of the Presbyterians, and disliked the aspirations of the latter, who desired to make Nonconformity almost as important as the Established Church. Whatever view the Protestant Dissenters may have had in the eighteenth century regarding the status of their congregations and their ministry, it is certain that at the

[1] The theory of Presbyterianism from a modern point of view is admirably stated in "The Presbyterian Church: its Doctrine, Worship, and Polity," by Rev. W. M. Macphail (Hodder & Stoughton, 1908).

time of the Revolution Settlement the general impression was that Nonconformity had become legalised (not tolerated) by that statute which is generally described as the Act of Toleration. Although this view may sound novel to the modern Nonconformist, and may not be acceptable, it was nevertheless the only basis upon which the Revolution was possible, and it found an able exponent in the second half of the century in Philip Furneaux, D.D., whose excellent "Letters" to Justice Blackstone met with the cordial approval of the Three Denominations. The leaders of the two chief parties among the Dissenters were wise enough to lay aside their differences, or to endeavour to do so, and in 1691 the London ministers drew up an Agreement, to which interesting document they gave an almost unanimous consent. The harmony was suddenly broken by the Antinomian controversy. The ground of it was chiefly doctrinal, but there were personal elements in it, and denominational rivalry was not completely extinct. Apart from the merits of the dispute, the situation became strained, and the serious charge brought against Dr. Williams has a partial explanation in the fact that he was strongly disliked by the Independents for his *jus divinum* view of Presbytery. An illustration of this denominational antipathy is found in a pamphlet on the Antinomian controversy, dated 1698, and written from an Independent point of view:—

"When he (Mr. Alsop) speaks of the Independents his pen is dipped in the poison of asps, but when he mentions his own party he is so transported with his own likeness that his charity, like a monk's cowl, covers all faults, whatever the sallies of his smutty and prophane wit may administer to men of froth and levity, yet they who are not taken with empty sounds must pity his weakness and folly, that he should in his old age be so

fond of the work of a fulsome, fleering satyrist or a Merry Andrew, when his thoughts should be employed for the great Audit-day, and not in providing a common sewer in which the enemies of all religion and the very drunkards upon an ale-bench may find dirt enough to throw upon the professors of the Gospel, when both he and they whom he abuses are gone out of the world."

It does not require to be said that there was nothing mollifying in remarks like this, and the two parties began to find the subject of Union impracticable. In the month of December, 1695, in which year Dr. Williams had been acquitted of the charge against him, a separate organisation was begun, the object of which was to give assistance to Congregational ministers in the country, and to encourage the preaching of the Gospel in England and Wales. It should be observed that by "the Gospel" was meant the ultra-orthodox views which the Independents at this time were strenuously upholding, and the proceedings of this Board were chiefly confined to the allocation of grants.

The result was that the terms "Presbyterian" and "Congregationalist," which had almost been given up by each party, came into the arena once more. The Presbyterians were no longer contending for a government by Presbyters, and it is doubtful if there were any officials in the congregation except the trustees. If "Presbyterian" had any specific meaning at all in the first quarter of the century, it was used to denote those ministers who believed in the validity of Presbyterian Orders, and in the maintenance of such traditions by an examination of candidates for the ministry. In this matter the Presbyterian party do not appear to have laid the same emphasis upon the "Call" by the "Church," and apparently also disregarded any inherent power which the congregation might have in the matter of Ordination. The Congrega-

tional Fund Board allowed lay-brethren on it, and the Presbyterian Fund probably did the same, and each Board undertook the responsibility for the support and oversight of its students.

As the Ejected ministers passed away, the high views which they had held regarding Ordination and their relationship with the Established Church came to an end, and, with the exception of a case here and there, simpler opinions regarding Ordination came to be held. James Peirce of Exeter wrote a pamphlet to prove the validity of Presbyterian Orders, but, generally speaking, the two denominations resumed the friendly relations which had been disturbed by the Antinomian controversy.

At the Salters' Hall Synod the denominational terms were lost in the designations "Subscribers" and "Non-subscribers". Presbyterians and Independents were in each party, but a few years afterwards the matter came up again by the establishment of the London Congregational Board. At the meeting held in September, 1727, at which thirty-five ministers were present, it was agreed that every one present who chose to be reckoned among the Congregational ministers and who did not design to vote in and with the body of the Presbyterian and Baptist ministers should be allowed to vote at this meeting. A Congregational minister was defined as one "who some way or other manifests his agreement to the Savoy Confession of Faith and the Order of the Congregational Churches". The introduction of the Savoy Confession was an important point, for it was the affirmation of the necessity for a doctrinal standard at a time when the Presbyterians had disavowed this altogether.

In the month of February, $17\frac{37}{38}$, the Congregational Fund Board revised the rules "agreed upon heretofore". The basis of representation was a contributory (money) one. The quorum had to consist of two ministers and

two of "the other Messengers, out of seven persons present, and the Chairman must always be a minister". The words "Churches" and "Congregations" apparently were used synonymously. In addition to an assurance of the character and ability of the ministers, satisfaction had to be given to the Board that he was sound in the Faith, particularly as to the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and explained in the Assembly's Confession of Faith and Catechism. The opinion was also expressed that every member of the Board had a right to desire this satisfaction.

These facts, gleaned from the scanty data available, illustrate the changes which were taking place. The Independents were inclined to impose a doctrinal standard, and to demand from their ministers an acceptance of the orthodox position. On the other hand, the Presbyterians were inclined to a laxity of doctrine and to an indifference regarding a doctrinal standard. As for the meeting-houses, the position varied. In some cases the polity was changed, either by the minister, the trustees, or the new congregation which entered, but in quite a number of cases the traditional name adhered to the meeting-house. It is therefore difficult to know exactly what transpired, unless a separate examination be made of every meeting-house. An interesting and unusual interchange of polity was the action of Doddridge at Northampton, in requesting the congregation to choose four elders.[1] A probable reason for this was that Doddridge, who was an Independent, wished to strengthen the spiritual character of the congregation and to minimise the authority of the trustees.

Both the Presbyterian Fund and the Congregational Fund Board allocated their financial grants to the

[1] Mr. Gordon states that Doddridge followed John Owen, D.D., in the matter of the Eldership.

ministers whose views appealed to them. When Priestley settled at Needham Market he refused a grant from the Independent Fund, although he had been brought up in that form of polity. This action was taken by him two years before the Independents withdrew their students and grants from the Carmarthen Academy, and established in the same town an Academy of their own.

From about the middle of the eighteenth century (or even earlier) the word "Presbyterian" had not a denominational but a doctrinal significance in England, and was generally connected with a theology implying something between Arianism and Unitarianism, including both these views. The word "Independent" was scarcely distinguishable for a time from "Presbyterian," but it permanently became attached to the meeting-houses holding Calvinistic doctrine. In an interesting analysis, recently made of London Nonconformity in 1810, the writer finds that in that year the number of Dissenting meeting-houses "in and near London" was 240.[1] In that article the writer draws attention to the fact that of the sixty-four congregations described as Calvinist, "Several are still flourishing as Independent Churches, while some became proprietary Chapels in connection with the Established Church". In the same list there are forty-two Independent meeting-houses, fifteen Presbyterian, and forty Baptist. Some of the Presbyterian and Baptist congregations were undoubtedly heterodox in opinion at that time, and the forty-two Independent meeting-houses were orthodox, although of these, several had passed through a heterodox period. On the whole, however, the Independents were orthodox and the English Presbyterians heterodox in London and elsewhere at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In considering the subject of polity, a definite value

[1] *Vide* p. 93.

should be given to the "Associations". These organisations were an attempt to carry on the voluntary meetings of ministers, which had been suggested by the leaders of the party about the middle of the seventeenth century. A notable instance was the Worcestershire Association, of which Richard Baxter was the moving spirit, and the model was adopted in Cumberland and Westmorland (Richard Gilpin drawing up the Articles), as well as in Essex, and in other parts. From the time of the Revolution these Associations were revived in various parts of England, and had a representative character to some degree. The ministers were always associated, though whether they always represented their congregations or only themselves is not clear. The Associations did not attempt to exercise Discipline, as the earlier ones did, but they had the customary right of ordination to the ministry. It cannot be said that they were successful, because the doctrinal differences which had been slumbering for many years arose after the Revolution, and the old denominational jealousies were revived. During the Exeter controversy, the "New Scheme Men" of the Devon and Cornwall Association were averse to a consideration by any Association of the points involved.

The Associations appear to have divided and to have become impossible after the Salters' Hall controversy of 1719. Philip Doddridge did much to revive them on a new basis, and here and there they continued to exist, maintaining open views on the subjects of Polity, Ordination, and Doctrine. An important incident in the history of the Cumberland and Westmorland Association was the ordination of Caleb Rotheram, Junr., in 1756, when a serious division of opinion occurred.[1] This Association continued its existence in an attenuated form

[1] *Vide* "The Older Nonconformity in Kendal," p. 334 ff., by Messrs. Nicholson & Axon (pub. 1915).

until the end of the eighteenth century.[1] Other meetings, similar in character, were the Associations in East Anglia, the Devon and Cornwall Association, the Newcastle Classis, the York West Riding Dissenting Ministers' Meeting, and the Dudley Double Lecture. The practice in these Associations varied, and although in several cases the ministers acted together with the object of strengthening the cause of Protestant Dissent, in other cases the tendency was to exclude those who differed from the particular Association on the subjects of Polity and Doctrine.

[1] C. H. S. "Trans.," Vol. IV, III. p. 159.

CHAPTER XV.

CREEDS AND CATECHISMS.

THE twenty-five years between the Act of Uniformity and the Revolution were a period of ebb-tide in English theology. The Westminster Assembly had been prevented from completing their revision of the XXXIX Articles, but their Confession of Faith and two Catechisms were the highest instance of organic Calvinism in England in the seventeenth century. In the second half of that century doctrinal matters were neglected, and questions relating to social, civil, and ecclesiastical rights occupied the time and attention of the nation.

Whatever view of the Westminster Confession doctrine had been taken before the Revolution, or whatever view was taken in the nineteenth century, Calamy and the founders of eighteenth-century Nonconformity were perfectly clear regarding their interpretation of it. They accepted the theology of the Westminster divines as a comprehensive statement of Christian truth, but they never forgot the primary attachment which their fathers had shown to the Word of God. It is a fact of much significance that William Chillingworth, a writer whose famous book had appeared before the days of the Civil War, began to be quoted with approval, especially on one particular matter. His dictum that "the Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of the Protestants" was the pivot upon which Calamy's life and ordination turned,

and for fifty years after the latter event Chillingworth received more recognition in England than he ever had done in his lifetime.

It was at the Salters' Hall Synod that the distinction between the Westminster Confession and the Bible was emphasised. The Nonsubscribers looked upon the former as a "human composition," but the latter was an inspired book, the theory of Verbal Inspiration being implicitly held by many Dissenters, though not by all. Indeed, there would have been no hesitation on the part of the majority of the Nonsubscribers to have given their assent to all and everything contained in the Scriptures. There is a suggestion of inconsistency in this attitude, but the explanation probably is that in their judgment, were Subscription justifiable at all, it could be given to the Word of God, on account of its divine origin.

Calamy, whose name did not appear among the Subscribers or the Nonsubscribers, nevertheless was in sympathy with the Nonsubscribers. He preached a series of sermons on the Trinity, discussing the subject in a conciliatory spirit, but in a sermon to young men delivered in 1725, on the birthday of George I, he advocated the Word of God as the best Directory—an apparent contrast with the Directory of the Westminster Assembly. The majority of the Nonsubscribers sought freedom from the Westminster Confession and the Catechisms, and a number of pamphlets appeared about this time. One writer preferred the Apostles' Creed as a simpler doctrinal standard. Another writer compared the Nonconformist liking for creeds with a similar tendency in the Church of Scotland, an allusion to the fact that Lorimer, a minister of a Scots Church in London, was Moderator of the Salters' Hall Subscribers. The Westminster Confession appears to have been tacitly

dropped, for there is no trace of any discussion upon this document. The Shorter Catechism became the target of the advanced party. A striking instance of the way in which Orthodoxy was adapting itself to new conditions is seen in the edition of the Catechism by Dr. Watts. Without altering the body of the work, he was able to make it acceptable for private and catechetical purposes for many years.

A much more serious doctrinal departure took place, when in the year 1736 a revised edition of the Assembly's Catechism was published by James Strong of Ilminster, an Arian minister. This was followed in the same year by a pamphlet by the Rev. Samuel Bourn (*secundus*) who criticised the views of Dr. Guyse, a London Independent minister, and attacked the vital sixth question of the Catechism.[1] These publications appear to have had some influence upon Philip Gibbs, who was at that time acting as an assistant to John Barker at the rural pastorate of Hackney. Gibbs has attained celebrity as an stenographer, but he came into the Arian Movement through a letter which he wrote to the Hackney congregation in 1737. In it he frankly told the congregation that when he went to Hackney, he had not made his "last understanding in religious matters". He concluded by saying that he had rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, as stated in the first Article of the Church of England, the sixth answer of the Assembly's Catechism, and, most of all, in the Athanasian Creed.

Bourn made another contribution to the subject by publishing in 1738 several Catechisms, or, as he calls them, "Lectures in a Catechetical Method," reprinting at the same time Strong's revision of the Assembly's Catechism. Bourn's work bears no likeness to the Assembly's Catechism, and is, indeed, a marked contrast to the opinions

[1] On the Godhead.

of that famous manual, but it exhibits in a clear and interesting manner the doctrinal opinions which were then becoming common among the Dissenters.

It was a significant fact that by the autumn of 1740, the trustees of the (orthodox) Fund left by the late William Coward, a London merchant, did not require their students to do more than to acknowledge the doctrines of the Shorter Catechism in general; or to give the sense of their own words of the doctrines of the Trinity, Election, Redemption, Vocation, and Perseverance.

Another illustration of the way in which the Shorter Catechism was losing influence is found in the following manner. At the close of the seventeenth century some leading Dissenters had opened a Charity School in Gravel Lane, Southwark. This work had been carried on among the children of the poorest sort of watermen, fishermen, and others; the children being taught without any expense to their parents, and furnished with Bibles, Catechisms, cyphering books, etc. This was the practice in the year 1746, but in the year 1759 it is stated that the children were no longer instructed in the Catechism, but in "the principles of common Christianity". The omission of definite theological instruction was indicative of the changed attitude on the subject of Creeds and Catechisms.

One attempt at least was made to adhere to the Larger Catechism. In 1731 Thomas Ridgley, D.D. (1667-1734), issued a volume of lectures on that Catechism. Ridgley was a Subscriber at Salters' Hall, and had shown himself reasonable in his opposition to the new views, but his lectures, although displaying much ability and knowledge, give evidences of the way in which orthodoxy was compelled to fight for every foot of ground at this depressing time.

The apathy of the eighteenth century towards Creeds and Confessions is explained by the fact that Christianity had become detached from Calvinism. In the negative results which followed an examination of the traditional doctrines by Arians such as John Taylor and George Benson, and liberal theologians like Isaac Watts and Simon Browne, there was not much material for enthusiasm. Whether we consider it deplorable or not, it is a fact that no one at this portion of the century who made any profession of theological knowledge was a thorough defender of the Calvinistic standards. The result was a disregard of the historical formularies, and it was more in the nature of a reaction than of a revival of learning that the Creeds and Confessions of orthodox Christianity were accepted by the orthodox party at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with a literalness which had not been known in England since the middle of the seventeenth century.

CHAPTER XVI.

SUBSCRIPTION.

ONE of the most difficult problems in English Protestantism is on the subject of Subscription. The practice and to some extent the advantage are readily recognised, but the difficulty is to reconcile this restriction of individual opinion with the Protestant principle of the right of private judgment.

The practice of Subscription originated at the University of Oxford in the sixteenth century, when it was first used by a Puritan Chancellor to exclude at Matriculation Roman Catholic students. It was customary there and at Cambridge for all degrees until 1871, and it is still applicable at Oxford for degrees in Divinity.

The Act of Uniformity was the most notorious instance of Subscription in English religious history, the consequences of which are felt to this day. The Puritan party and their Nonconforming descendants were familiar with the practice long before that Act, but, as the Rev. Alexander Gordon points out, Subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith was not demanded, and even the Solemn League and Covenant did not bind to anything more specific in the matter of doctrine than the Word of God and the example of the best Reformed Churches.[1]

[1] "Heads of English Unitarian History" (pub. 1895).

At the Revolution, all parties agreed to subscribe to the historic doctrinal standards, viz., the Thirty-nine Articles of the Established Church and the Westminster Assembly's Catechisms and Confession of Faith, which latter documents the Congregationalists accepted with slight variations. The harmony between Conformity and Nonconformity on this subject is seen from the fact that the Dissenters considered the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England equivalent to the Assembly's standards.

A study of contemporary opinion will warrant the conclusion that this basis of the Revolution Settlement was accepted by all parties not because it represented the theology, philosophy, and spirit of that period, but because all parties were anxious to avoid further controversy. The important fact must therefore be remembered, that the Dissenters closed the seventeenth century with a changed, and almost indifferent attitude towards the standards of the previous fifty years. John Humfrey (1621-1719), an Ejected minister, and a venerable figure at that time, declared that Nonconformity could never be anything else than varied in its doctrine. Writing at the time of the Antinomian controversy, he expressed the view that "our Union is not in doctrinals, but in practicals and in love, leaving every man (acknowledging only the Scriptures and the Three Creeds) to the liberty of his opinion".

When Clarke issued his "Scripture Doctrine" in 1712, he recommended principles of interpretation which although widely accepted, are in themselves an indication of the departure that had already taken place in the matter of doctrine. For the next five years the subject was freely discussed, and it came to a height in the Bangorian controversy, beginning in the year 1717. The course of events in the Established Church was followed with the keenest interest by the Dissenters, and the

subject of Subscription, as we have seen, formed the chief debate at the Salters' Hall Synod. Some of the Nonsubscribers at that meeting were attached to Clarkean views of the Trinity, but there were others whose orthodoxy could not be doubted. They were men of wide experience, who had observed the changes of the previous twenty years and had perceived that the thing for which their fathers and forefathers had been fighting was Protestant liberty. Through the new atmosphere which had come into English religious life, they were able to realise that liberty was a greater heritage than even a Confession of Faith.

From the beginning of the eighteenth century, Subscription in the Church of England had never been anything but a matter of form. Clarke's theory was that a person was at liberty to subscribe to the doctrinal standards if he could in any sense reconcile them with Scripture. In this he was supported by other clergymen, especially by John Jackson and Arthur Ashley Sykes, but he prudently dropped the paragraph relating to the subject out of the second edition of his book. His argument had been adopted by many, and although Dr. Daniel Waterland wrote a vigorous pamphlet against it, proving that the Church required Subscription according to her own meaning of the Articles, the theory of Clarke continued in the Church for the greater part of the century. It ought to be said in justice to Clarke that he refused to subscribe a second time, and contented himself with the obscure position of the chaplaincy of Wigston's Hospital, Leicester, where Subscription was not required. This shows that he felt the force of Waterland's criticism, and his action is all the more creditable when it is perceived that had he been able to reconcile himself to Subscription and to accept the *status quo* of the Established Church, he might have become an Archbishop.

The Salters' Hall Synod was the means of bringing the question of Subscription in its final form before the Dissenters. It was true that they had adhered to the Westminster Confession with more consistency than the Church of England had done to the Thirty-nine Articles, but for both parties Calvinism had lost its reality and comprehensiveness. We cannot estimate too highly the action of those Nonsubscribers whose doctrinal opinions were unchanged, and who in all sincerity were fighting for individual liberty of opinion and the supremacy of the Scriptures. During this controversy remarks were made which proved that the attitude to Scripture itself had changed. Peirce of Exeter told Enty that he distinguished between receiving the Scripture and believing the Scripture: "We receive all the Scriptures, but believe only those we understand". This is probably one of the most audacious but most candid utterances regarding the Scripture which the eighteenth century ever made, and whatever objection may be taken to it in theory, it was—and is—an almost universal practice. The eighteenth-century Dissenters more frequently referred to the "Holy Scriptures," but either to the "Scriptures" or to "The Bible". This latter title became general after the Salters' Hall controversy and in Samuel Bourn's Catechism it is used in the sense of a book of documents.

The Subscribers at Salters' Hall Synod maintained their attitude, sometimes aggressively, and in this way two different opinions on the subject grew up in Nonconformity. It may be said, however, that for the following twenty years opinion in favour of the Nonsubscribers' position gradually increased, and ultimately it came to be recognised that this was the safest position for Nonconformity to take.

An interesting letter written by the Rev. William

Wood, M.D., the minister of the Meeting House at Darlington, explains what was the recognised attitude of the English Dissenters, particularly the Nonsubscribing and Presbyterian portion :—

"DARLINGTON,
"*January* 31, 1736-7.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have been favoured with yours this morning, in return to which I can give no answer to the people at Ayton but this, viz., that I refer them wholly to Mr. Ware. To yourself I have somewhat more to say, and that is that I shall have no hand in bringing candidates from Scotland among us, unless they will, actually or virtually, abjure their National Kirk and resolve never more to return to it for preferment. I may seem to be in jest, but Mr. Thompson who is thoroughly acquainted with my subject knows me to be in sad earnest. My reason is that tho' the candidates from Scotland are many, even some of 'em very ingenious, and I hope pious too in the main, yet one string is lacking, and that the distinguishing characteristic of an English from a Scotch Presbyterian. The English builds upon the large foundation of the New Testament. The Scotch one does not profess to do so, even when in England, by which he shows that he only comes hither for bread, and would secure his retreat to the Establishment on the other side of Tweed when a favourable opportunity offers. Hence comes a scourge to such of us as are reviving primitive Christianity, and a fatal obstacle to the removal of the attachment to Confessions of Faith of human composure, which our brethren on this side of the water so much labour after. I am infinitely far from a prejudice against any country, but I utterly dislike that set of principles annexed to all present Establishments, and these principles must unavoidably spread through England in time if every new vacancy be attempted to

be supplied from Scotland, which is very much the practice in Northumberland, Cumberland, and some other places. When there are no proper candidates for vacancies in England, I should then comply with the method of having recourse for 'em to Scotland, when it will at any time in all appearance be an easy task to find not only sufficient supply for all Britain, but perhaps for all the Protestant countries of Europe.

The report of my inclination to Ayton is a mistake. I do at present supply once a month at Northallerton, but I intend to discontinue this in a time or two more, for I am already tired of spiritual polygamy.

"Your most obedient humble servant,

"WM. WOOD."[1]

The attitude of the Established Church to the subject of Subscription was shown in two differing, definite ways. The one was indicated by Clarke, whose latitudinarianism did not refer particularly to doctrine, as it did in the seventeenth century, but to a lax interpretation of the Articles. The other was in the endeavour to procure a reformation of the Prayer Book and Articles in conformity with Scripture, so that the formularies would become agreeable to all parties, and Subscription would no longer be objectionable. The praiseworthy attempts made by the Rev. John Jones of Alconbury and his band of anonymous but powerful friends, reveal a Christian sincerity and a Protestant spirit in an age when it was more profitable to be an ecclesiastical sophist than to be an honest man.

Francis Blackburne was one of this number, and although he subscribed and became Archdeacon of Cleveland, he condemned the practice. His book was the storm-centre of a controversy which prepared the way for a petition on the subject, presented to Parliament in 1772.

[1] John Black MSS. Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of England.

The petitioners desired to have legalised a declaration regarding the Holy Scriptures, and particularly avoided any reference to doctrinal standards. The movement was cordially supported by the majority of the Dissenters throughout England, and although it failed, it is a permanent testimony to the desire for a reformation that voluntarily arose within the Established Church. The impression derived from a perusal of the pamphlets issued during the "Confessional" controversy, is that in the middle of the eighteenth century English Conformity and Nonconformity, following John Locke, would have granted the title of a "Christian" to those who were prepared to accept the formula "Jesus is Christ".

With the revival of orthodox Christianity among the Dissenters, the custom of Subscription once more came into vogue. The example of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion in 1783, in demanding Subscription to a formula, explains the revival of the practice among many Nonconformists. Subscription was general for the greater part of the nineteenth century, and Nonconformity in the twentieth century finds itself perplexed upon the subject. It cannot, however, be allowed to remain much longer in the suspended state in which it is found to-day, and a clear statement of the Nonconformist position is urgently needed. A distinction will have to be drawn between the Bible as a final and complete Authority, and the *contents* of it as a standard of personal belief. Another distinction to be observed is that between the theology of Scripture and the theology of the Church Catholic, and Nonconformity will sooner or later have to pronounce upon this matter, specifying which of these two kinds of theology is binding. Altogether, the subject is not as easy as it looks, and the eighteenth century writers deserve high praise for the skill and care with which they examined both sides of a knotty problem.

CHAPTER XVII.

REVIVAL.

ENGLISH Nonconformity in the eighteenth century was individualistic to a dangerous degree, and the meeting-house was an isolated unit whatever denominational title it might happen to have. Strictly, there is no such thing as a Nonconformist tradition, if by that is meant a concentrated body of opinion and practice by Dissenting congregations. This explains the doctrinal fluctuation of each meeting-house, which at different times expressed itself either by welcoming heterodoxy, opposing it, or struggling with it.

In examining the subject of Revival, each meeting-house must be taken separately, as local circumstances decided the doctrinal characteristic of the congregation. Long pastorates such as those of Dr. Caleb Rotheram at Kendal and Paul Cardale at Evesham, generally resulted in the transference of a congregation to the new opinions; while occasionally this operated in favour of Orthodoxy.

Trustees were also important factors in the situation, and many disputes occurred which leave no doubt as to the legal power of these persons in Church life. The poverty of the congregation often resulted in the selection of a minister with inferior gifts and training, who frequently was orthodox; and it was circumstances like these which decided the trend of events. Before the third quarter of the century had come to an end, many of the meeting-houses had expired through sheer ex-

haustion, and others had entered the final stage of heterodoxy. We shall, however, confine ourselves to the consideration of those congregations which revived.

The "Associations" did a definite work in maintaining a liberal attitude, and when the orthodox tide set in, quite a number of these meeting-houses felt the new current.

The group of congregations known as the "Scots Churches in England" gradually drew away from the English Presbyterian theological position to that of the Independents and the Baptists, and with various elements from Scotland were decidedly orthodox in the last quarter of the century. The primary factor in the revival of English Nonconformity was the series of revivals which took place in the Church of England about the one time.

The darkest decade for Christianity in England was that between 1730 and 1740. In the Established Church Pluralism was a scandal. Out of 12,000 livings, 3000 or more were impropriate, and 4165 *sine cures* or non-resident livings. The prevalence of Arianism in the meeting-houses had nearly destroyed enthusiasm for everything which Nonconformity represented. From this arid ground there grew up a harvest of individual religious experience, which gave nourishment to a famished Christianity, and brought back life to the nation.

A double event which many will be slow to describe as a coincidence, was the conversion of the Countess of Huntingdon and the formation of the first Methodist Society, almost simultaneously. These two sources of religious activity originated in the Established Church, and cannot be described as Nonconformist for some time afterward, but without their aid historical Nonconformity never would have rallied.

It is impossible to do justice to these two events in a few words. Many will be disposed to admire the Countess of Huntingdon for the work achieved by her preachers, who may not be able to agree with her methods or theology. Although we may occasionally smile at her view of things, her patronage was of the right kind, and on this particular subject the eighteenth century had none of our modern sensitiveness. The crude theology which she encouraged became widely acceptable as genuine orthodoxy, although it differed greatly from the orthodox standards, but in many cases this form of Calvinism displaced the original. The influence of this Christian noblewoman upon Nonconformity was felt directly and indirectly, as in the conversion of George Burder, who became an Independent pastor at Lancaster, and afterwards was one of the founders of the London Missionary Society, the Religious Tract Society, and the British and Foreign Bible Society. Another preacher of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion was Captain Jonathan Scott, who after ordination at Lancaster as "a Presbyter at large," began an itinerant work which resulted in the formation of twenty-two Congregational Churches in Staffordshire, Cheshire, Shropshire, and Lancashire.

It is interesting to observe that the form of Methodism favoured by the Countess of Huntingdon was the Calvinistic type, advocated by George Whitefield. She and her circle took their authority for the same from the Articles of the Church of England. As criticism of her actions arose, the Countess inclined more to those Dissenters who were maintaining the Calvinistic traditions. The publication of the "Life of Colonel Gardiner," by Doddridge, in 1745, appears to have been the origin of Doddridge's friendship with the Countess. In a letter to his wife, written about this time, Doddridge tells how

he preached in her family by express desire, and adds that he was really astonished at the traces of religion he discovered in her.

When the separation occurred between Whitefield and Wesley, "they parted, indeed, like Paul and Barnabas; but the extent of the sphere of their usefulness was thereby enlarged". From that period the Countess began to encourage "ministers and Christians of the Calvinistic persuasion, according to the liberal sense of the Articles of the Church of England". Dr. Thomas Gibbons, an Independent minister, afterwards a tutor of Mile End Academy, was introduced to the Countess, and a friend writing to her made the following remark:—

"I am glad your Ladyship approves of Dr. Gibbons. He is, I think, a worthy man. By maintaining your present course, you will have an opportunity of conversing with the best of all parties, without being a bigot, and too strenuously attached to any. Surely in this your Ladyship is directed from above. The blessed Jesus cares for His people of all denominations. He is gathering His elect out of all."

Another illustration of the way in which the Countess approached the Evangelical Nonconformists was the acquaintance which she formed with Dr. John Gill (1697-1771), a Baptist minister, who shortly before had published an acceptable Commentary on the New Testament. The influence of Gill upon the Countess of Huntingdon and upon his friend Toplady proves that the revival in the Church of England was taking place through Calvinism, derived partly from without, and partly from within. It was not until a late stage in the history of this remarkable movement that the Countess had any inclination to separate from the Church of England. Nearly twenty years after her acquaintance with Doddridge, Gibbons,

and Gill, she wrote to an Independent minister to this effect:—

"I have no objection to Truth from the lips of a Dissenter, provided he has no design to form a party."

It was not until the year 1779, when by that time the doctrinal position of the movement had become anomalous, that the chapels of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion were registered as Dissenting places of worship.

The story of Methodism has been thoroughly and competently described by many historians, and does not require to be dealt with here. It inaugurated a period which marked the recovery of the fundamental facts of religious experience. Methodism recoined the seventeenth century word "conversion," and in the process, the technical and theological meaning of the word disappeared. Conversion became to Wesley "a conscious experience of the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God".

"July 6, 1739.—In the morning, being by myself, I found the work of the Spirit was very powerful upon me. . . . In this violent agony I continued about four hours; and then I began to feel that . . . God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into me, crying 'Abba, Father'. For that is the cry of every new-born soul. O mighty, powerful, happy change!"

In attempting to define the relationship of Methodism to contemporary religious movements, the one noticeable feature is the general hostility towards it. Indeed, the nearest historical parallel is the seventeenth-century attitude of both Conformity and Nonconformity towards Quakerism. Many of the objections to early Methodism were reasonable, for in addition to curious and at times questionable accompaniments, it was a theological system of an aggressive kind. This may be seen from a letter

written by John Wesley in the summer of 1759 to Dr. John Taylor, an Arian minister, whose book on the Doctrine of Original Sin was acceptable in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America:—

"REV. SIR,

"I esteem you as a person of uncommon sense and learning, but your doctrine I cannot esteem; and some time since I believed it my duty to speak my sentiments at large concerning your doctrine of Original Sin. When Mr. Newton of Liverpool mentioned this, and asked whether you designed to answer, you said, 'You thought not; for it would only be a personal controversy between Jo. W—y and Jo. T—r'. How gladly, if I durst, would I accept of this discharge from so unequal a contest! for I am thoroughly sensible, humanly speaking, it is *formica contra leonem.* How gladly, were it indeed no other than a personal controversy! but certainly it is not; it is a controversy *de re*, if ever there was one in the world. Indeed, concerning a thing of the highest importance; nay, all the things that concern our eternal peace. It is Christianity or Heathenism! for take away the Scriptural doctrine of Redemption or Justification, and that of the New Birth, the beginning of Sanctification, or —which amounts to the same—explain them as you do, suitably to your doctrine of Original Sin, and what is Christianity better than Heathenism? Wherein (save in rectifying some of our notions) has the religion of Saint Paul any pre-eminence over that of Socrates or Epictetus? This is, therefore, to my apprehension, the least a personal controversy of any in the world. Your person and mine are out of the question: the point is, Are those things, that have been believed for many ages throughout the Christian world, real, solid truths, or monkish dreams and vain imaginations?

"But farther, it is certain between you and me there need be no personal controversy at all: for we may agree to leave each other's person and character absolutely untouched, while we sum up and answer the several arguments advanced, as plainly and closely as we can.

"Either I or you mistake the whole of Christianity from the beginning to the end! Either my scheme or yours is as contrary to the Scriptural as the Koran is. Is it mine or yours? Yours has gone through all England, and made numerous converts; I attack it from end to end. Let all England judge, whether it can be defended or not!

"Earnestly praying that God may give you and me a right understanding in all things,

"I am, Rev. Sir,

"Your Servant, for Christ's sake,

"J. W."

Unfortunately, there is no reference to this letter in the particulars extant relating to Taylor. His book was published nineteen years before Wesley wrote the letter, and this period of silence may be explained either by the suggestion that Taylor's views and influence were coming more directly under the notice of Wesley; or that Wesley was encountering difficulties in formulating his theological scheme.

The Independent congregations were revived in various ways. According to a contemporary writer, they had been shattered by Methodism and Sandemanianism between the years 1746 and 1766, but these doctrines had appeared in the Independent meeting-houses probably as an alternative to Arian views. The recovery took place along several lines. One was by return to the moderate Calvinism of the first quarter of the century, including a renewal of the Church Covenant. Another was by the

formation of new congregations in the old meeting-houses, on the basis of a doctrine which was a blend of the views of Whitefield with those of the Countess of Huntingdon.

The Baptist meeting-houses were in three different groups, the General Baptists being heterodox, and the Particular Baptists Calvinistic.[1] The revival of the latter group owed much to men like Robinson of Cambridge and Andrew Fuller (1754-1815). The latter was able to create a new interest in Calvinism, by rejecting much that was traditional in it. His temperament was both practical and speculative, and he carried on a discussion with Priestley on Socinianism at the time when he was taking a leading part in the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society. His writings are very readable, and his arguments direct and forcible.

Other influences were at work in the regeneration of England, and books like the famous one by William Law were gradually deepening the spiritual tone of the age.[2] The Evangelical Low Church movement of the latter part of the century was virtually a revival of Calvinism, and was nearly similar to seventeenth century Nonconformity.

The last element that need be mentioned was that which came from Scotland. For twenty years after the Salters' Hall Synod the English Presbyterians disliked the Scotch Presbyterians. With the rise of "Moderatism" in Scotland, the English theology advanced to a Socinian stage, and some of the meeting-houses, especially those near the Border, selected their ministers from the Moderate party of the Church of Scotland, in preference to the more advanced English Presbyterians. Several preachers who were sent from the Secession Churches in Scotland became Independents,

[1] "The old General Baptists were heterodox: the New Connexion General Baptists were not" (Gordon).

[2] "A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life," 1728.

and revived historic Nonconformity, one being James McQuahae, whose ministry was chiefly in Lancashire. James Scott, a minister of the Church of Scotland, was a definite factor in the revival which appeared in Lancashire and Yorkshire, and is honourably known for his part in the establishment of the Heckmondwike Academy.

In these and other ways Nonconformity came to life again in England, often by means of unlearned and ignorant men, not belonging to the regular ministry of the Protestant Dissenters. There were many slow and commonplace events before Nonconformity found itself once more in the possession of the fundamental facts of religious experience, but out of the intellectual atmosphere which surrounded it there broke forth with signs and wonders the apostolic truth, that with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

No attempt has been made in the previous chapters to write down all and everything concerning Nonconformity in the eighteenth century. It is gradually being realised what a large amount of material relating to this period lies hidden away in obscure and uninteresting pamphlets. The facts are now being diligently sought and thoroughly sifted, so that the results will be more accurate than ever they have been. When this shall have been fully done, some surprising conclusions will have been arrived at, and in one matter at least the general opinion will be changed. Instead of characterising the eighteenth century as a dead, unfruitful period of Church life, we shall have to admit that it was the century which saw the origin of all that we call religious to-day. It saw the rise of the Non-jurors, and the inception of the original "Low Church" party which gave a breadth to the Church of England that undoubtedly lengthened its life. It saw the origin of the modern Low Church party. It contained within the compass of its years such diverse yet powerful movements as those of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, Methodism, Orthodox Independency, Scottish Presbyterianism in England, Unitarianism, Calvinistic Methodism, and other smaller sects; while the modern zeal for Foreign Missions and for philanthropic work found its inspiration in the eighteenth century.

It is superfluous to say that a number of these movements arose from the clamant need of the century. The

greater number of them gained little or no support at first, and had it not been for their inherent virility, they would have died shortly after birth. It is to the abiding honour of the century that in the midst of a depression at times universal, and in an age essentially selfish, there were found some men and women eager to perceive the path of Christian service and to pursue it.

The century has often been misunderstood on account of the number of controversies which it contained. Modern England was in the making, and before the process could be begun, ancient England had to be broken up and thrown into the crucible. Much of the controversy related to points in a theology that has almost disappeared, and, consequently, the interest in such has also disappeared.

There is also another aspect of the matter, which was quaintly expressed towards the end of the century, by Benjamin Flower, a Dissenting minister. "Controversy," said he, "is like duck-hunting; when you have your bird in full view, he suddenly dives under water, and presently appears when least expected." What is true about the subject itself is true also about the literature of controversy, and it may be said that the eighteenth century has been so difficult to understand because it has been difficult to find what it actually had to say.

In attempting in these chapters to give the facts of eighteenth-century Nonconformity a correlation that did not always exist, the particular end in view has been to establish between the scattered fragments of Dissent a unity of action and a continuity of principle not always evident. A secondary, but no less important object has been to vindicate those who insisted on the right of private judgment, and who conscientiously separated from the Established Church in a century when it would have been both easy and profitable to do otherwise.

It is a striking fact in the history of English Christianity that neither did Conformity nor Nonconformity in the nineteenth century learn much from its predecessor regarding Religion, and still less regarding Theology. The religion of the nineteenth century instead of continuing as a development of eighteenth-century religion, went back to the seventeenth century for its theology and its ecclesiastical theory. Judging from the implicit belief of the nineteenth century in the Prayer Book, the Articles, the historic Creeds, and the Westminster Assembly's Confession and Catechisms, the controversies of the eighteenth century did not leave any vital mark upon the religion of England.

The paramount explanation of this phenomenon is that the rationalising of religion which took place in the eighteenth century, completely destroyed the recognition of the fact that Christianity has enshrined itself in Revelation. Such movements as Methodism, and those which proceeded along the lines of traditional orthodoxy, were protests against the excessive emphasis which the Deists and others were laying upon the intellectual aspects of religion. Before the middle of the century had arrived, John Barker had told his friend Doddridge that his ears were being dinned with the talk of "Reason, the great Law of Reason, the infinite Law of Reason," that it was inclined to put one out of conceit with this valuable asset of human nature. The nineteenth century anxious to avoid the failure of its predecessor, ignored the intellectual side, and during the first half of the century insisted so strongly on the personal factors of religious experience, that it permanently secured the highest place for *practical* religion—a contribution of the utmost value.

The eighteenth century is rather useless as a guide to the Christianity of the present day. It is not, however, without its lessons, and Nonconformity will find

that it can still speak with authority on at least four subjects, which sooner or later will have to be considered. These are firstly, the problems created in those religious communities which have inherited Calvinistic traditions; secondly, the urgent question of doctrinal Subscription; thirdly, the attitude of Nonconformity to theological development, and, lastly, Church Union.

1. *The Problems Created by Calvinistic Traditions.*—Opinion upon this critical question is bound to be varied, but the present writer is convinced that the only way in which modern Nonconformity can save the battle for theological liberty is by retreat. Whenever the hour arrives, and it is not yet, that those best qualified to judge shall conclude that the theological system which brought Reformation to England is antiquated and untrue, it will be the duty of such to indicate this momentous decision to those Churches which they represent. One thing is perfectly certain, that a solution of the difficulty will not be found by a latitudinarian interpretation of the Calvinistic standards. No number of ingenious devices for getting round these documents, or through them, or over them, will alter the fact that until we qualify our attitude by a special pronouncement we are bound to accept these documents in the spirit if not in the letter of their theology: and an evasion of this historical consequence will only create confusion and breed insincerity. On this matter, the eighteenth century was capable of passing a judgment, and it did so with a thoroughness and a persuasiveness which will be appreciated more than it has been.

2. *Subscription.*—In the chapter on this subject, we shall find from the data presented that it is difficult to deny the affirmation of the Nonsubscribers at Salters' Hall. The history of eighteenth-century Nonconformity has clearly proved that Subscription *is* an infraction of the

Protestant principle—the right of private judgment. It is an injustice when it is imposed upon a community, and particularly if the matter subscribed unto is against their conscience. Subscription, however, cannot be an injustice when made a condition of a Christian Society, as the candidate for admission, either to membership or ordination, voluntarily applies, and signifies his assent to the partial curtailment of his Protestant privileges. Liberty of choice may be quite consistent with imposition as a possible choice. The hostility towards Subscription in the eighteenth century arose from the fact that liberty of choice had not been universally granted, and Subscription therefore was more or less compulsory and against the Protestant principle. Provided that perfect freedom is given to the individual, it is reasonable for a Protestant Church to expect Subscription, it being taken for granted that the doctrine to be subscribed is agreeable to the subscriber.

3. *Doctrinal Development.*—The eighteenth century has something to teach the twentieth on the subject of theological liberty, and something to give in the way of warning. For a portion of the nineteenth century there was little liberty in English Nonconformity, but the present century promises almost too much. The eighteenth century was disastrous to Nonconformity by the liberty which it allowed the individual in the fundamental matters of the Christian Faith. It should never be forgotten that it is an inherent right of Protestantism to displace or modify its standards, according to the light and guidance which are granted unto it; but a modification which obliterated the basis of Protestant doctrine and removed the foundations upon which the Early Church was built would be an abuse of the Protestant principle, calculated to destroy the root of that branch of Christ's Church.

4. *Church Union.*—The last thing is the question be-

tween Conformity and Nonconformity. Unfortunately, both sides have taken it for granted that such a thing was impossible in the nature of the case. No one could have this opinion who is acquainted with the opinions of the leaders of Protestant Dissent in the last decade of the seventeenth century. The relationships between the two parties are frequently referred to in pleasing terms, until at least the middle of the eighteenth century, and Dr. Samuel Chandler, writing in 1736, declared that the Church of England by the removal of certain practices and principles might "indeed, be the glory of all Established Churches of the Reformation, and her Constitution be both amiable and secure". Chandler's opinion was not a mere courteous sentiment, but was based upon an intimate study of the subject of Persecution, especially as it applied to English Christianity.

The subject of Church Union in England will sooner or later come into the realm of practical politics. The movement in Scotland in this direction is gratifying, but in England the matter will be more delicate and difficult. Historically, there is virtually nothing to hinder a union between Conformity and Nonconformity, for the theological and ecclesiastical differences might be reduced to a few essentials. The question of Establishment might appear insuperable to some Nonconformists, but a historical examination of this subject would enlighten many as to the exact views of Nonconformity on this matter. If the Church of England were to agree with Evangelical Nonconformity upon a basis of "the Bible only," the differences between these two great parties would become few and secondary. The chief obstacle to this plan would be a present unwillingness on the part of the Established Church to recognise the historical basis, for modern Churchmanship has expanded, and now finds its material in sources far beyond the Prayer Book and the

XXXIX Articles. It will be a tragedy too terrible to contemplate if Conformity and Nonconformity permanently become rival kingdoms in a realm which should be under one Lord, and be of one Faith and Baptism. In order to achieve a Union which would be a blessing, the doctrinal basis for the Church's teaching on the Person of our Lord would require to be found in the three historic Creeds of Christendom. Modern scholarship can no doubt geologise, and explain how these documents came to have their origin and their title. It can never dispel the fact that from the earliest ages they have preserved the teaching of the Church on its most vital questions. The phraseology of those Creeds is a subsidiary matter. The identical words may not be in Scripture, and this may appear to raise a Protestant dilemma; but there is nothing in the language or the statement of those Creeds which is inconsistent with the Scripture teaching regarding the Lord Jesus Christ.

It looks as if the time had come for a re-statement of the problems of Christology, and that, after the experience of many centuries (not the least important being the eighteenth century in England), the Church was ready to add a fourth Creed to the three already universally recognised. Whether the twentieth century is brave enough to undertake this task, and has sufficient Faith for so exalted a piece of work, remains to be seen. Were it accomplished, and were the obstacles removed to Christian Union in England, the eighteenth century would have conferred a benefit upon English religion which cost much to acquire.

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